

Ian Fleming was born in 1908 and educated at Eton where he was *Victor Ludorum* two years in succession — a distinction only once equalled. After Sandhurst, and Munich and Geneva Universities, he joined Reuters, making his first mark as a journalist during the famous 1933 Moscow trial of British engineers. He began to understand espionage methods.

After a short spell as a partner in a stockbroking firm, he joined the staff of *The Times* and returned to Moscow. During the war he served with the rank of Commander in the Naval Intelligence Division and in 1945 he joined the *Kemsley Newspapers* as foreign manager. In Jamaica he built his house, 'Goldeneye' in which to spend his annual leave and it was here that James Bond was 'conceived'.

Casino Royale was completed on the eve of his marriage to Anne Rothermere in 1952, and proved to be the turning point in his life. In all he published thirteen books about the character who became the most famous secret agent ever, and so far seven James Bond adventures have been filmed. Twenty-six million copies of his books have been sold by Pan alone.

During the 1950s Ian Fleming's health began to fail; he died at the early age of fifty-six in 1964.

By the same author in Pan Books

CASINO ROYALE
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THUNDERBALL
ON HER MAJESTY'S SECRET SERVICE
THE SPY WHO LOVED ME
FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE
FOR YOUR EYES ONLY
MOONRAKER
DOCTOR NO
DIAMONDS ARE FOREVER
THE MAN WITH THE GOLDEN GUN
OCTOPUSSY

COLONEL SUN (by Robert Markham)

GOLDFINGER

IAN FLEMING



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Goldfinger said, "Mr Bond, they have a saying in Chicago: once is happenstance, twice is coincidence, the third time it's my action." "

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To
my gentle Reader
William Plomer

PART ONE : HAPPENSTAI

CHAPTER I

REFLECTIONS IN A DOUBLE BOURBON

MES BOND, with two double bourbons inside him, sat in the final departure lounge of Miami Airport and thought out life and death.

It was part of his profession to kill people. He had never hesitated doing it and when he had to kill he did it as well as he knew how and forgot about it. As a secret agent who held the rare double-O prefix—the licence to kill in the Secret Service—it was his duty to be as cool about death as a surgeon. If it happened, it happened. Regret was unprofessional—worse, it was death-watch beetle in the soul.

And yet there had been something curiously impressive about the death of the Mexican. It wasn't that he hadn't deserved to die. He was an evil man, a man they call in Mexico a *capungo*. A capungo is a bandit who will kill for as little as forty pesos, which is about twenty-five shillings—though probably he had been paid more to attempt the killing of Bond—and, from the look of him, he had been an instrument of pain and misery all his life. Yes, it had certainly been time for him to die; but when Bond had killed him, less than twenty-four hours before, life had gone out of the body so quickly, so utterly, that Bond had almost seen it come out of his mouth as it does, in the shape of a bird, in Haitian primitives.

What an extraordinary difference there was between a body full of person and a body that was empty! Now there is someone, now there is no one. This had been a Mexican with a name and an address, an employment card and perhaps a driving licence. Then something had gone out of him, out of the envelope of flesh and cheap clothes, and had left him an empty paper bag waiting for the dustcart. And the difference, the thing that had gone out of the stinking Mexican bandit, was greater than all Mexico.

knocked down at the weapon that had done it. The
age of his right hand was red and swollen. It would
be a bruise. Bond flexed the hand, kneading it with
he had been doing the same thing at intervals through
the plane trip that had got him away. It was a painful
but if he kept the circulation moving the harm
would be needed quickly. One couldn't tell how soon the
would be needed again. Cynicism gathered at the
s of Bond's mouth.

National Airlines, 'Airmine of the Stars', announces the
ture of their flight NA 106 to La Guardia Field, New
York. Will all passengers please proceed to gate number
10. All aboard, please."

The Tannoy switched off with an echoing click. Bond
looked at his watch. At least another ten minutes before
Transamerica would be called. He signalled to a waitress
and ordered another double bourbon on the rocks. When
the wide, chunky glass came, he swirled the liquor round for
the ice to blunt it down and swallowed half of it. He stubbed
out the butt of his cigarette and sat, his chin resting on his
left hand, and gazed moodily across the twinkling tarmac
to where the last half of the sun was slipping gloriously into
the Gulf.

The death of the Mexican had been the finishing touch
to a bad assignment, one of the worst—squalid, dangerous
and without any redeeming feature except that it had got
him away from headquarters.

A big man in Mexico had some poppy fields. The flowers
were not for decoration. They were broken down for opium
which was sold quickly and comparatively cheaply by the
waiters at a small café in Mexico City called the 'Madre
de Cacao'. The Madre de Cacao had plenty of protection. If
you needed opium you walked in and ordered what you wanted
with your drink. You paid for your drink at the caisse
and the man at the caisse told you how many noughts to add
to your bill. It was an orderly commerce of no concern to
anyone outside Mexico. Then, far away in England, the Govern-
ment, urged on by the United Nations' drive against
drug smuggling, announced that heroin would be banned
from sale in Soho and also among respectable
people.

els from China, Turkey and Italy were run almost dry
e illicit stock-piling in England. In Mexico City, a
ant-spoken Import and Export merchant called Blackwell
sister in England who was a heroin addict. He loved her
was sorry for her and, when she wrote that she would
someone didn't help, he believed that she wrote the
a and set about investigating the illicit dope traffic in
ico. In due course, through friends and friends of friends,
got to the Madre de Cacao and on from there to the big
xican grower. In the process, he came to know about the
nomics of the trade, and he decided that if he could make
fortune and at the same time help suffering humanity he had
und the Secret of Life. Blackwell's business was in fertilizers.
e had a warehouse and a small plant and a staff of three for
oil testing and plant research. It was easy to persuade the
ig Mexican that, behind this respectable front, Blackwell's
eam could busy itself extracting heroin from opium. Carriage
o England was swiftly arranged by the Mexican. For the
equivalent of a thousand pounds a trip, every month one
of the diplomatic couriers of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
carried an extra suitcase to London. The price was reasonable.
The contents of the suitcase, after the Mexican had deposited
it at the Victoria Station left-luggage office and had mailed
the ticket to a man called Schwab, c/o Boox-an-Pix, Ltd,
WCI, were worth twenty thousand pounds.

Unfortunately Schwab was a bad man, unconcerned with
suffering humanity. He had the idea that if American juvenile
delinquents could consume millions of dollars' worth of
heroin every year, so could their Teddy boy and girl cousins.
In two rooms in Pimlico, his staff watered the heroin with
stomach powder and sent it on its way to the dance halls and
amusement arcades.

Schwab had already made a fortune when the CID Ghost
Squad got on to him. Scotland Yard decided to let him make a
little more money while they investigated the source of his
supply. They put a close tail on Schwab and in due course were
led to Victoria Station and thence to the Mexican courier.
At that stage, since a foreign country was concerned, the
Secret Service had had to be called in and Bond was ordered
to find out where the courier got his supplies and to destroy
the channel at source.

Bond did as he was told. He flew to Mexico City and

quickly got to the Madre de Cacao. Thence, posing as a buyer for the London traffic, he got back to the big Mexican. The Mexican received him amiably and referred him to Blackwell. Bond had rather taken to Blackwell. He knew nothing about Blackwell's sister, but the man was obviously an amateur and his bitterness about the heroin ban in England rang true. Bond broke into his warehouse one night and left a thermite bomb. He then went and sat in a café a mile away and watched the flames leap above the horizon of rooftops and listened to the silver cascade of the fire-brigade bells. The next morning he telephoned Blackwell. He stretched a handkerchief across the mouthpiece and spoke through it.

"Sorry you lost your business last night. I'm afraid your insurance won't cover those stocks of soil you were researching."

"Who's that? Who's speaking?"

"I'm from England. That stuff of yours has killed quite a lot of young people over there. Damaged a lot of others. Santos won't be coming to England any more with his diplomatic bag. Schwab will be in jail by tonight. That fellow Bond you've been seeing, he won't get out of the net either. The police are after him now."

Frightened words came back down the line.

"All right, but just don't do it again. Stick to fertilizers."

Bond hung up.

Blackwell wouldn't have had the wits. It was obviously the big Mexican who had seen through the false trail. Bond had taken the precaution to move his hotel, but that night, as he walked home after a last drink at the Copacabana, a man suddenly stood in his way. The man wore a dirty white linen suit and a chauffeur's white cap that was too big for his head. There were deep blue shadows under Aztec cheek-bones. In one corner of the slash of a mouth there was a toothpick and in the other a cigarette. The eyes were bright pinpricks of marihuana.

"You like woman? Make jigajig?"

"No."

"Coloured girl? Fine jungle tail?"

"No."

"Mebbe pictures?"

The gesture of the hand slipping into the coat was so well

Transamerica ticket counter where arrangements for their overnight accommodation will be made. Thank you."

Sol! That too! Should he transfer to another flight or spend the night in Miami? Bond had forgotten his drink. He picked it up and, tilting his head back, swallowed the bourbon to the last drop. The ice tinkled cheerfully against his teeth. That was it. That was an idea. He would spend the night in Miami and get drunk, stinking drunk so that he would have to be carried to bed by whatever tart he had picked up. He hadn't been drunk for years. It was high time. This extra night, thrown at him out of the blue, was a spare night, a gone night. He would put it to good purpose. It was time he let himself go. He was too tense, too introspective. What the hell was he doing, glooming about this Mexican, this capungo who had been sent to kill him? It had been kill or get killed. Anyway, people were killing other people all the time, all over the world. People were using their motor cars to kill with. They were carrying infectious diseases around, blowing microbes in other people's faces, leaving gasjets turned on in kitchens, pumping out carbon monoxide in closed garages. How many people, for instance, were involved in manufacturing H-bombs, from the miners who mined the uranium to the shareholders who owned the mining shares? Was there any person in the world who wasn't somehow, perhaps only statistically, involved in killing his neighbour?

The last light of the day had gone. Below the indigo sky the flare paths twinkled green and yellow and threw tiny reflections off the oily skin of the tarmac. With a shattering roar a DC 7 hurtled down the main green lane. The windows in the transit lounge rattled softly. People got up to watch. Bond tried to read their expressions. Did they hope the plane would crash—give them something to watch, something to talk about, something to fill their empty lives? Or did they wish it well? Which way were they willing the sixty passengers? To live or to die?

Bond's lips turned down. Cut it out. Stop being so damned morbid. All this is just reaction from a dirty assignment. You're stale, tired of having to be tough. You want a change. You've seen too much death. You want a slice of life—easy, soft, high.

Bond was conscious of steps approaching. They stopped

at his side. Bond looked up. It was a clean, rich-looking, middle-aged man. His expression was embarrassed, deprecating.

"Pardon me, but surely it's Mr Bond . . . Mr—er—James Bond?"

CHAPTER 2

LIVING IT UP

BOND LIKED anonymity. His "Yes, it is" was discouraging. "Well, that's a mighty rare coincidence." The man held out his hand. Bond rose slowly, took the hand and released it. The hand was pulpy and unarticulated—like a hand-shaped mud pack, or an inflated rubber glove. "My name is Du Pont. Junius Du Pont. I guess you won't remember me, but we've met before. Mind if I sit down?"

The face, the name? Yes, there *was* something familiar. Long ago. Not in America. Bond searched the files while he summed the man up. Mr Du Pont was about fifty—pink, clean-shaven and dressed in the conventional disguise with which Brooks Brothers cover the shame of American millionaires. He wore a single-breasted dark tan tropical suit and a white silk shirt with a shallow collar. The rolled ends of the collar were joined by a gold safety pin beneath the knot of a narrow dark red and blue striped tie that fractionally wasn't the Brigade of Guards'. The cuffs of the shirt protruded half an inch below the cuffs of the coat and showed cabochon crystal links containing miniature trout flies. The socks were charcoal-grey silk and the shoes were old and polished mahogany and hinted Pearl. The man carried a dark, narrow-brimmed straw Homburg with a wide claret ribbon.

Mr Du Pont sat down opposite Bond and produced cigarettes and a plain gold Zippo lighter. Bond noticed that he was sweating slightly. He decided that Mr Du Pont was what he appeared to be, a very rich American, mildly embarrassed. He knew he had seen him before, but he had no idea where or when.

"Smoke?"

"Thank you." It was a Parliament. Bond affected not to notice the offered lighter. He disliked held-out lighters. He picked up his own and lit the cigarette.

"France, '51, Royale les Eaux." Mr Du Pont looked eagerly at Bond. "That Casino. Ethel, that's Mrs Du Pont, and me were next to you at the table the night you had the big game with the Frenchman."

Bond's memory raced back. Yes, of course. The Du Ponts had been Nos 4 and 5 at the baccarat table. Bond had been 6. They had seemed harmless people. He had been glad to have such a solid bulwark on his left on that fantastic night when he had broken Le Chiffre. Now Bond saw it all again—the bright pool of light on the green baize, the pink crab hands across the table scuttling out for the cards. He smelled the smoke and the harsh tang of his own sweat. That had been a night! Bond looked across at Mr Du Pont and smiled at the memory. "Yes, of course I remember. Sorry I was slow. But that was quite a night. I wasn't thinking of much except my cards."

Mr Du Pont grinned back, happy and relieved. "Why, gosh, Mr Bond. Of course I understand. And I do hope you'll pardon me for butting in. You see . . ." He snapped his fingers for a waitress. "But we must have a drink to celebrate. What'll you have?"

"Thanks. Bourbon on the rocks."

"And dimple Haig and water." The waitress went away.

Mr Du Pont leant forward, beaming. A whiff of soap or after-shave lotion came across the table. Lenthéric? "I knew it was you. As soon as I saw you sitting there. But I thought to myself, Junius, you don't often make an error over a face, but let's just go make sure. Well, I was flying Transamerican tonight and, when they announced the delay, I watched your expression and, if you'll pardon me, Mr Bond, it was pretty clear from the look on your face that you had been flying Transamerican too." He waited for Bond to nod. He hurried on. "So I ran down to the ticket counter and had me a look at the passenger list. Sure enough, there it was, 'J. Bond'."

Mr Du Pont sat back, pleased with his cleverness. The drinks came. He raised his glass. "Your very good health, sir. This sure is my lucky day."

Bond smiled non-committally and drank.

Mr Du Pont leant forward again. He looked round. There was nobody at the nearby tables. Nevertheless he lowered his voice. "I guess you'll be saying to yourself, well, it's nice to see Junius Du Pont again, but what's the score? Why's he so particularly happy at seeing me on just this night?" Mr Du Pont raised his eyebrows as if acting Bond's part for him. Bond put on a face of polite inquiry. Mr Du Pont leant still farther across the table. "Now, I hope you'll forgive me, Mr Bond. It's not like me to pry into other people's secre . . . er—affairs. But, after that game at Royale, I did hear that you were not only a grand card player, but also that you were—er—how shall I put it?—that you were a sort of—er—investigator. You know, kind of intelligence operative." Mr Du Pont's indiscretion had made him go very red in the face. He sat back and took out a handkerchief and wiped his forehead. He looked anxiously at Bond.

Bond shrugged his shoulders. The grey-blue eyes that looked into Mr Du Pont's eyes, which had turned hard and watchful despite his embarrassment, held a mixture of candour, irony and self-deprecation. "I used to dabble in that kind of thing. Hangover from the war. One still thought it was fun playing Red Indians. But there's no future in it in peacetime."

"Quite, quite." Mr Du Pont made a throwaway gesture with the hand that held the cigarette. His eyes evaded Bond's as he put the next question, waited for the next lie. (Bond thought, there's a wolf in this Brooks Brothers clothing. This is a shrewd man.) "And now you've settled down?" Mr Du Pont smiled paternally. "What did you choose, if you'll pardon the question?"

"Import and Export. I'm with Universal. Perhaps you've come across them."

Mr Du Pont continued to play the game. "Hm. Universal. Let me see. Why, yes, sure I've heard of them. Can't say I've ever done business with them, but I guess it's never too late." He chuckled fatly. "I've got quite a heap of interests all over the place. Only stuff I can honestly say I'm not interested in is chemicals. Maybe it's my misfortune, Mr Bond, but I'm not one of the chemical Du Ponts."

Bond decided that the man was quite satisfied with the particular brand of Du Pont he happened to be. He made no comment. He glanced at his watch to hurry Mr Du Pont's

play of the hand. He made a note to handle his own cards carefully. Mr Du Pont had a nice pink kindly baby-face with a puckered, rather feminine turn-down mouth. He looked as harmless as any of the middle-aged Americans with cameras who stand outside Buckingham Palace. But Bond sensed many tough, sharp qualities behind the fuddyduddy façade.

Mr Du Pont's sensitive eye caught Bond's glance at his watch. He consulted his own. "My, oh my! Seven o'clock and here I've been talking away without coming to the point. Now, see here, Mr Bond. I've got me a problem on which I'd greatly appreciate your guidance. If you can spare me the time and if you were counting on stopping over in Miami tonight I'd reckon it a real favour if you'd allow me to be your host." Mr Du Pont held up his hand. "Now, I think I can promise to make you comfortable. So happens I own a piece of the Floridiana. Maybe you heard we opened around Christmas time? Doing a great business I'm happy to say. Really pushing that little old Fountain Blue," Mr Du Pont laughed indulgently. "That's what we call the Fontainebleau down here. Now, what do you say, Mr Bond? You shall have the best suite—even if it means putting some good paying customers out on the sidewalk. And you'd be doing me a real favour." Mr Du Pont looked imploring.

Bond had already decided to accept—blind. Whatever Mr Du Pont's problem—blackmail, gangsters, women—it would be some typical form of rich man's worry. Here was a slice of the easy life he had been asking for. Take it. Bond started to say something politely deprecating. Mr Du Pont interrupted: "Please, please, Mr Bond. And believe me, I'm grateful, very grateful indeed." He snapped his fingers for the waitress. When she came, he turned away from Bond and settled the bill out of Bond's sight. Like many very rich men he considered that showing his money, letting someone see how much he tipped, amounted to indecent exposure. He thrust his roll back into his trousers pocket (the hip pocket is not the place among the rich) and took Bond by the arm. He sensed Bond's resistance to the contact and removed his hand. They went down the stairs to the main hall.

"Now, let's just straighten out your reservation." Mr Du Pont headed for the Transamerica ticket counter. In a few curt phrases Mr Du Pont showed his power and efficiency in his own, his American, realm.

"Yes, Mr Du Pont. Surely, Mr Du Pont. I'll take care of that, Mr Du Pont."

Outside, a gleaming Chrysler Imperial sighed up to the kerb. A tough-looking chauffeur in a biscuit-coloured uniform hurried to open the door. Bond stepped in and settled down in the soft upholstery. The interior of the car was deliciously cool, almost cold. The Transamerican representative hustled out with Bond's suitcase, handed it to the chauffeur and, with a half-bow, went back into the Terminal. "Bill's on the Beach," said Mr Du Pont to the chauffeur and the big car slid away through the crowded parking lots and out on to the parkway.

Mr Du Pont settled back. "Hope you like stone crabs, Mr Bond. Ever tried them?"

Bond said he had, that he liked them very much.

Mr Du Pont talked about Bill's on the Beach and about the relative merits of stone and Alaska crab meat while the Chrysler Imperial sped through downtown Miami, along Biscayne Boulevard and across Biscayne Bay by the Douglas MacArthur Causeway. Bond made appropriate comments, letting himself be carried along on the gracious stream of speed and comfort and rich small-talk.

They drew up at a white-painted, mock-Regency frontage in clapboard and stucco. A scrawl of pink neon said: BILL'S ON THE BEACH. While Bond got out, Mr Du Pont gave his instructions to the chauffeur. Bond heard the words. "The Aloha Suite," and "If there's any trouble, tell Mr Fairlie to call me here. Right?"

They went up the steps. Inside, the big room was decorated in white with pink muslin swags over the windows. There were pink lights on the tables. The restaurant was crowded with sunburned people in expensive tropical get-ups—brilliant garish shirts, jangling gold bangles, dark glasses with jewelled rims, cute native straw hats. There was a confusion of scents. The wry smell of bodies that had been all day in the sun came through.

Bill, a pansified Italian, hurried towards them. "Why, Mr Du Pont. Is a pleasure, sir. Little crowded tonight. Soon fix you up. Please this way please." Holding a large leather-bound menu above his head the man weaved his way between the diners to the best table in the room, a corner table for six. He pulled out two chairs, snapped his

fingers for the maître d'hôtel and the wine waiter, spread two menus in front of them, exchanged compliments with Mr Du Pont and left them.

Mr Du Pont slapped his menu shut. He said to Bond, "Now, why don't you just leave this to me? If there's anything you don't like, send it back." And to the head waiter, "Stone crabs. Not frozen. Fresh. Melted butter. Thick toast. Right?"

"Very good, Mr Du Pont." The wine waiter, washing his hands, took the waiter's place.

"Two pints of pink champagne. The Pommery '50. Silver tankards. Right?"

"Vairry good, Mr Du Pont. A cocktail to start?"

Mr Du Pont turned to Bond. He smiled and raised his eyebrows.

Bond said, "Vodka martini, please. With a slice of lemon peel."

"Make it two," said Mr Du Pont. "Doubles." The wine waiter hurried off. Mr Du Pont sat back and produced his cigarettes and lighter. He looked round the room, answered one or two waves with a smile and a lift of the hand and glanced at the neighbouring tables. He edged his chair nearer to Bond's. "Can't help the noise, I'm afraid," he said apologetically. "Only come here for the crabs. They're out of this world. Hope you're not allergic to them. Once brought a girl here and fed her crabs and her lips swelled up like cycle tyres."

Bond was amused at the change in Mr Du Pont—this racy talk, the authority of manner once Mr Du Pont thought he had got Bond on the hook, on his payroll. He was a different man from the shy embarrassed suitor who had solicited Bond at the airport. What did Mr Du Pont want from Bond? It would be coming any minute now, the proposition. Bond said, "I haven't got any allergies."

"Good, good."

There was a pause. Mr Du Pont snapped the lid of his lighter up and down several times. He realized he was making an irritating noise and pushed it away from him. He made up his mind. He said, speaking at his hands on the table in front of him, "You ever play Canasta, Mr Bond?"

"Yes, it's a good game. I like it."

"Two-handed Canasta?"

"I have done. It's not so much fun. If you don't make a fool of yourself—if neither of you do—it tends to even out. Law of averages in the cards. No chance of making much difference in the play."

Mr Du Pont nodded emphatically. "Just so. That's what I've said to myself. Over a hundred games or so, two equal players will end up equal. Not such a good game as Gin or Oklahoma, but in a way that's just what I like about it. You pass the time, you handle plenty of cards, you have your ups and downs, no one gets hurt. Right?"

Bond nodded. The martinis came. Mr Du Pont said to the wine waiter, "Bring two more in ten minutes." They drank. Mr Du Pont turned and faced Bond. His face was petulant, crumpled. He said, "What would you say, Mr Bond, if I told you I'd lost twenty-five thousand dollars in a week playing two-handed Canasta?" Bond was about to reply. Mr Du Pont held up his hand. "And mark you, I'm a good card player. Member of the Regency Club. Play a lot with people like Charlie Goren, Johnny Crawford—at bridge that is. But what I mean, I know my way around at the card table." Mr Du Pont probed Bond's eyes.

"If you've been playing with the same man all the time, you've been cheated."

"Ex-actly." Mr Du Pont slapped the table-cloth. He sat back. "Ex-actly. That's what I said to myself after I'd lost—lost for four whole days. So I said to myself, this bastard is cheating me and by golly I'll find out how he does it and have him hounded out of Miami. So I doubled the stakes and then doubled them again. He was quite happy about it. And I watched every card he played, every movement. Nothing! Not a hint or a sign. Cards not marked. New pack whenever I wanted one. My own cards. Never looked at my hand—couldn't, as I always sat dead opposite him. No kibitzer to tip him off. And he just went on winning and winning. Won again this morning. And again this afternoon. Finally I got so mad at the game—I didn't show it, mind you—" Bond might think he had not been a sport—"I paid up politely. But, without telling this guy, I just packed my bag and got me to the airport and booked on the first plane to New York. Think of that!" Mr Du Pont threw up his hands. "Running away. But twenty-five grand is twenty-five grand. I could see it getting to fifty, a hundred. And I

just couldn't stand another of these damned games and I couldn't stand not being able to catch this guy out. So I took off. What do you think of that? Me, Junius Du Pont, throwing in the towel because I couldn't take the licking any more!"

Bond grunted sympathetically. The second round of drinks came. Bond was mildly interested, he was always interested in anything to do with cards. He could see the scene, the two men playing and playing and the one man quietly shuffling and dealing away and marking up his score while the other was always throwing his cards into the middle of the table with a gesture of controlled disgust. Mr Du Pont was obviously being cheated. How? Bond said, "Twenty-five thousand's a lot of money. What stakes were you playing?"

Mr Du Pont looked sheepish. "Quarter a point, then fifty cents, then a dollar. Pretty high I guess with the games averaging around two thousand points. Even at a quarter, that makes five-hundred dollars a game. At a dollar a point, if you go on losing, it's murder."

"You must have won sometimes."

"Oh sure, but somehow, just as I'd got the s.o.b. all set for a killing, he'd put down as many of his cards as he could meld. Got out of the bag. Sure, I won some small change, but only when he needed a hundred and twenty to go down and I'd got all the wild cards. But you know how it is with Canasta, you have to discard right. You lay traps to make the other guy hand you the pack. Well, darn it, he seemed to be psychic! Whenever I laid a trap, he'd dodge it, and almost every time he laid one for me I'd fall into it. As for giving me the pack—why, he'd choose the damndest cards when he was pushed—discard singletons, aces, God knows what, and always get away with it. It was just as if he knew every card in my hand."

"Any mirrors in the room?"

"Heck, no! We always played outdoors. He said he wanted to get himself a sunburn. Certainly did that. Red as lobster. He'd only play in the mornings and afternoons. Said if he played in the evening he couldn't get to sleep."

"Who is this man, anyway? What's his name?"

"Goldfinger."

"First name?"

"Auric. That means golden, doesn't it? He certainly is nat. Got flaming red hair."

"Nationality?"

"You won't believe it, but he's a Britisher. Domiciled in Nassau. You'd think he'd be a Jew from the name, but he doesn't look it. We're restricted at the Floridiana. Wouldn't have got in if he had been. Nassavian passport. Age forty-two. Unmarried. Profession, broker. Got all this from his passport. Had me a peek via the house detective when I started to play with him."

"What sort of broker?"

Du Pont smiled grimly. "I asked him. He said, 'Oh, anything that comes along.' Evasive sort of fellow. Clams up if you ask him a direct question. Talks away quite pleasantly about nothing at all."

"What's he worth?"

"Hal" said Mr Du Pont explosively. "That's the damndest thing. He's loaded. But loaded! I got my bank to check with Nassau. He's lousy with it. Millionaires are a dime a dozen in Nassau, but he's rated either first or second among them. Seems he keeps his money in gold bars. Shifts them around the world a lot to get the benefit of changes in the gold price. Acts like a damn federal bank. Doesn't trust currencies. Can't say he's wrong in that, and seeing how he's one of the richest men in the world there must be something to his system. But the point is, if he's as rich as that, what the hell does he want to take a lousy twenty-five grand off me for?"

A bustle of waiters round their table saved Bond having to think up a reply. With ceremony, a wide silver dish of crabs, big ones, their shells and claws broken, was placed in the middle of the table. A silver sauceboat brimming with melted butter and a long rack of toast was put beside each of their plates. The tankards of champagne frothed pink. Finally, with an oily smirk, the head waiter came behind their chairs and, in turn, tied round their neck long white silken bibs that reached down to the lap.

Bond was reminded of Charles Laughton playing Henry VIII, but neither Mr Du Pont nor the neighbouring dine seemed surprised at the hoggish display. Mr Du Pont, with a gleeful "Every man for himself", raked several hunks of crab on to his plate, doused them liberally in melted butter.

and dug in. Bond followed suit and proceeded to eat, or rather devour, the most delicious meal he had had in his life.

The meat of the stone crabs was the tenderest, sweetest shellfish he had ever tasted. It was perfectly set off by the dry toast and slightly burned taste of the melted butter. The champagne seemed to have the faintest scent of strawberries. It was ice cold. After each helping of crab, the champagne cleaned the palate for the next. They ate steadily and with absorption and hardly exchanged a word until the dish was cleared.

With a slight belch, Mr Du Pont for the last time wiped butter off his chin with his silken bib and sat back. His face was flushed. He looked proudly at Bond. He said reverently, "Mr Bond, I doubt if anywhere in the world a man has eaten as good a dinner as that tonight. What do you say?"

Bond thought, I asked for the easy life, the rich life. How do I like it? How do I like eating like a pig and hearing remarks like that? Suddenly the idea of ever having another meal like this, or indeed any other meal with Mr Du Pont, revolted him. He felt momentarily ashamed of his disgust. He had asked and it had been given. It was the puritan in him that couldn't take it. He had made his wish and the wish had not only been granted, it had been stuffed down his throat. Bond said, "I don't know about that, but it was certainly very good."

Mr Du Pont was satisfied. He called for coffee. Bond refused the offer of cigars or liqueurs. He lit a cigarette and waited with interest for the catch to be presented. He knew there would be one. It was obvious that all this was part of the come-on. Well, let it come.

Mr Du Pont cleared his throat. "And now, Mr Bond, I have a proposition to put to you." He stared at Bond, trying to gauge his reaction in advance.

"Yes?"

"It surely was providential to meet you like that at the airport." Mr Du Pont's voice was grave, sincere. "I've never forgotten our first meeting at Royale. I recall every detail of it—your coolness, your daring, your handling of the cards." Bond looked down at the table-cloth. But Mr Du Pont had got tired of his peroration. He said hurriedly, "Mr Bond, I will pay you ten thousand dollars to stay here as my

guest until you have discovered how this man Goldfinger beats me at cards."

Bond looked Mr Du Pont in the eye. He said, "That's a handsome offer, Mr Du Pont. But I have to get back to London. I must be in New York to catch my plane within forty-eight hours. If you will play your usual sessions tomorrow morning and afternoon I should have plenty of time to find out the answer. But I must leave tomorrow night, whether I can help you or not. Done?"

"Done," said Mr Du Pont.

CHAPTER 3

THE MAN WITH AGORAPHOBIA

THE flapping of the curtains wakened Bond. He threw off the single sheet and walked across the thick pile carpet to the picture window that filled the whole of one wall. He drew back the curtains and went out on to the sun-filled balcony.

The black and white chequer-board tiles were warm, almost hot to the feet although it could not yet be eight o'clock. A brisk inshore breeze was blowing off the sea, straining the flags of all nations that flew along the pier of the private yacht basin. The breeze was humid and smelt strongly of the sea. Bond guessed it was the breeze that the visitors like, but the residents hate. It would rust the metal fittings in their homes, fox the pages of their books, rot their wallpaper and pictures, breed damp-rot in their clothes.

Twelve storeys down the formal gardens, dotted with palm trees and beds of bright croton and traced with ~~near~~ gravel walks between avenues of bougainvillea, were ~~and~~ dull. Gardeners were working, raking the paths and picking up leaves with the lethargic slow motion of ~~coloured~~ help. Two mowers were at work on the lawns and ~~what~~ they had already been, sprinklers were gracefully ~~spraying~~ handfuls of spray.

Directly below Bond, the elegant curve of the ~~the~~ Club swept down to the beach—two storeys of ~~the~~

rooms below a flat roof dotted with chairs and tables and an occasional red and white striped umbrella. Within the curve was the brilliant green oblong of the Olympic-length swimming-pool fringed on all sides by row upon row of mattressed steamer chairs on which the customers would soon be getting their fifty-dollar-a-day sunburn. White-jacketed men were working among them, straightening the lines of chairs, turning the mattresses and sweeping up yesterday's cigarette butts. Beyond was the long, golden beach and the sea, and more men—raking the tideline, putting up the umbrellas, laying out mattresses. No wonder the neat card inside Bond's wardrobe had said that the cost of the Aloha Suite was two hundred dollars a day. Bond made a rough calculation. If he was paying the bill, it would take him just three weeks to spend his whole salary for the year. Bond smiled cheerfully to himself. He went back into the bedroom, picked up the telephone and ordered himself a delicious, wasteful breakfast, a carton of king-size Chesterfields and the newspapers.

By the time he had shaved and had an ice-cold shower and dressed it was eight o'clock. He walked through into the elegant sitting-room and found a waiter in a uniform of plum and gold laying out his breakfast beside the window. Bond glanced at the *Miami Herald*. The front page was devoted to yesterday's failure of an American ICBM at the nearby Cape Canaveral and a bad upset in a big race at Hialeah.

Bond dropped the paper on the floor and sat down and slowly ate his breakfast and thought about Mr Du Pont and Mr Goldfinger.

His thoughts were inconclusive. Mr Du Pont was either a much worse player than he thought, which seemed unlikely on Bond's reading of his tough, shrewd character, or else Goldfinger was a cheat. If Goldfinger cheated at cards, although he didn't need the money, it was certain that he had also made himself rich by cheating or sharp practice on a much bigger scale. Bond was interested in big crooks. He looked forward to his first sight of Goldfinger. He also looked forward to penetrating Goldfinger's highly successful and, on the face of it, highly mysterious method of fleecing Mr Du Pont. It was going to be a most entertaining day. Idly Bond waited for it to get under way.

The plan was that he would meet Mr Du Pont in the garden at ten o'clock. The story would be that Bond had flown down from New York to try and sell Mr Du Pont a block of shares from an English holding in a Canadian Natural Gas property. The matter was clearly confidential and Goldfinger would not think of questioning Bond about details. Shares, Natural Gas, Canada. That was all Bond needed to remember. They would go along together to the roof of the Cabana Club where the game was played and Bond would read his paper and watch. After luncheon, during which Bond and Mr Du Pont would discuss their 'business', there would be the same routine. Mr Du Pont had inquired if there was anything else he could arrange. Bond had asked for the number of Mr Goldfinger's suite and a pass-key. He had explained that if Goldfinger was any kind of a professional card-sharp, or even an expert amateur, he would travel with the usual tools of the trade—marked and shaved cards, the apparatus for the Short Arm Delivery, and so forth. Mr Du Pont had said he would give Bond the key when they met in the garden. He would have no difficulty getting one from the manager.

After breakfast, Bond relaxed and gazed into the middle distance of the sea. He was not keyed up by the job on hand, only interested and amused. It was just the kind of job he had needed to clear his palate after Mexico.

At half past nine Bond left his suite and wandered along the corridors of his floor, getting lost on his way to the elevator in order to reconnoitre the lay-out of the hotel. Then, having met the same maid twice, he asked his way and went down in the elevator and moved among the scattering of early risers through the Pineapple Shopping Arcade. He glanced into the Bamboo Coffee Shoppe, the Rendezvous Bar, the La Tropicala dining-room, the Kittekat Klub for children and the Boom-Boom Nighterie. He then went purposefully out into the garden. Mr Du Pont, now dressed 'for the beach' by Abercrombie & Fitch, gave him the pass-key to Goldfinger's suite. They sauntered over to the Cabana Club and climbed the two short flights of stairs to the top deck.

Bond's first view of Mr Goldfinger was startling. At the far corner of the roof, just below the cliff of the hotel, a man was lying back with his legs up on a steamer chair.

He was wearing nothing but a yellow satin bikini slip, dark glasses and a pair of wide tin wings under his chin. The wings, which appeared to fit round his neck, stretched out across his shoulders and beyond them and then curved up slightly to rounded tips.

Bond said, "What the hell's he wearing round his neck?"

"You never seen one of those?" Mr Du Pont was surprised. "That's a gadget to help your tan. Polished tin. Reflects the sun up under your chin and behind the ears—the bits that wouldn't normally catch the sun."

"Well, well," said Bond.

When they were a few yards from the reclining figure Mr Du Pont called out cheerfully, in what seemed to Bond an overloud voice, "Hi there!"

Mr Goldfinger did not stir.

Mr Du Pont said in his normal voice. "He's very deaf." They were now at Mr Goldfinger's feet. Mr Du Pont repeated his hail.

Mr Goldfinger sat up sharply. He removed his dark glasses. "Why, hullo there." He unhitched the wings from round his neck, put them carefully on the ground beside him and got heavily to his feet. He looked at Bond with slow, inquiring eyes.

"Like you to meet Mr Bond, James Bond. Friend of mine from New York. Countryman of yours. Come down to try and talk me into a bit of business."

Mr Goldfinger held out a hand. "Pleased to meet you, Mr Bomb."

Bond took the hand. It was hard and dry. There was the briefest pressure and it was withdrawn. For an instant Mr Goldfinger's pale, china-blue eyes opened wide and stared hard at Bond. They stared right through his face to the back of his skull. Then the lids drooped, the shutter closed over the X-ray, and Mr Goldfinger took the exposed plate and slipped it away in his filing system.

"So no game today." The voice was flat, colourless. The words were more of a statement than a question.

"Whaddya mean, no game?" shouted Mr Du Pont boisterously. "You weren't thinking I'd let you hang on to my money? Got to get it back or I shan't be able to leave this darned hotel," Mr Du Pont chuckled richly. "I'll tell Sam to fix the table. James here says he doesn't know much

about cards and he'd like to learn the game. That right, James?" He turned to Bond. "Sure you'll be all right with your paper and the sunshine?"

"I'd be glad of the rest," said Bond. "Been travelling too much."

Again the eyes bored into Bond and then drooped. "I'll get some clothes on. I had intended to have a golf lesson this afternoon from Mr Armour at the Boca Raton. But cards have priority among my hobbies. My tendency to un-cock the wrists too early with the mid-irons will have to wait." The eyes rested incuriously on Bond. "You play golf, Mr Bomb?"

Bond raised his voice. "Occasionally, when I'm in England."

"And where do you play?"

"Huntercombe."

"Ah—a pleasant little course. I have recently joined the Royal St Marks. Sandwich is close to one of my business interests. You know it?"

"I have played there."

"What is your handicap?"

"Nine."

"That is a coincidence. So is mine. We must have a game one day." Mr Goldfinger bent down and picked up his tin wings. He said to Mr Du Pont, "I will be with you in five minutes." He walked slowly off towards the stairs.

Bond was amused. This social sniffing at him had been done with just the right casual touch of the tycoon who didn't really care if Bond was alive or dead but, since he was there and alive, might as well place him in an approximate category.

Mr Du Pont gave instructions to a steward in a white coat. Two others were already setting up a card table. Bond walked to the rail that surrounded the roof and looked down into the garden, reflecting on Mr Goldfinger.

He was impressed. Mr Goldfinger was one of the most relaxed men Bond had ever met. It showed in the economy of his movement, of his speech, of his expressions. Mr Goldfinger wasted no effort, yet there was something coiled, compressed, in the immobility of the man.

When Goldfinger had stood up, the first thing that had struck Bond was that everything was out of proportion.

Goldfinger was short, not more than five feet tall, and on top of the thick body and blunt, peasant legs, was set almost directly into the shoulders, a huge and it seemed exactly round head. It was as if Goldfinger had been put together with bits of other people's bodies. Nothing seemed to belong. Perhaps, Bond thought, it was to conceal his ugliness that Goldfinger made such a fetish of sunburn. Without the red-brown camouflage the pale body would be grotesque. The face, under the cliff of crew-cut carrot hair, was as startling, without being as ugly, as the body. It was moon-shaped without being moonlike. The forehead was fine and high and the thin sandy brows were level above the large light blue eyes fringed with pale lashes. The nose was fleshily aquiline between high cheek-bones and cheeks that were more muscular than fat. The mouth was thin and dead straight, but beautifully drawn. The chin and jaws were firm and glinted with health. To sum up, thought Bond, it was the face of a thinker, perhaps a scientist, who was ruthless, sensual, stoical and tough. An odd combination.

What else could he guess? Bond always mistrusted short men. They grew up from childhood with an inferiority complex. All their lives they would strive to be big—bigger than the others who had teased them as a child. Napoleon had been short, and Hitler. It was the short men that caused all the trouble in the world. And what about a misshapen short man with red hair and a bizarre face? That might add up to a really formidable misfit. One could certainly feel the repressions. There was a powerhouse of vitality humming in the man that suggested that if one stuck an electric bulb into Goldfinger's mouth it would light up. Bond smiled at the thought. Into what channels did Goldfinger release his vital force? Into getting rich? Into sex? Into power? Probably into all three. What could his history be? Today he might be an Englishman. What had he been born? Not a Jew—though there might be Jewish blood in him. Not a Latin or anything farther south. Not a Slav. Perhaps a German—no, a Balt! That's where he would have come from. One of the old Baltic provinces. Probably got away to escape the Russians. Goldfinger would have been warned—or his parents had smelled trouble and they had got him out in time. And what had happened then? How had he worked his way up to being one of the richest men in the world? One

day it might be interesting to find out. For the time being it would be enough to find out how he won at cards.

"All set?" Mr Du Pont called to Goldfinger who was coming across the roof towards the card table. With his clothes on—a comfortably fitting dark blue suit, a white shirt open at the neck—Goldfinger cut an almost passable figure. But there was no disguise for the great brown and red football of a head and the flesh-coloured hearing aid plugged into the left ear was not an improvement.

Mr Du Pont sat with his back to the hotel. Goldfinger took the seat opposite and cut the cards. Du Pont won the cut, pushed the other pack over to Goldfinger, tapped them to show they were already shuffled and he couldn't bother to cut, and Goldfinger began the deal.

Bond sauntered over and took a chair at Mr Du Pont's elbow. He sat back, relaxed. He made a show of folding his paper to the sports page and watched the deal.

Somehow Bond had expected it, but this was no card-sharp. Goldfinger dealt quickly and efficiently, but with no hint of the Mechanic's Grip, those vital three fingers curled round the long edge of the cards and the index finger at the outside short upper edge—the grip that means you are armed for dealing Bottoms or Seconds. And he wore no signet ring for pricking the cards, no surgical tape round a finger for marking them.

Mr Du Pont turned to Bond. "Deal of fifteen cards," he commented. "You draw two and discard one. Otherwise straight Regency rules. No monkey business with the red treys counting one, three, five, eight, or any of that European stuff."

Mr Du Pont picked up his cards. Bond noticed that he sorted them expertly, not grading them according to value from left to right, or holding his wild cards, of which he had two, at the left—a pattern that might help a watchful opponent. Mr Du Pont concentrated his good cards in the centre of his hand with the singletons and broken melds on either side.

The game began. Mr Du Pont drew first, a miraculous pair of wild cards. His face betrayed nothing. He discarded casually. He only needed two more good draws to go out unseen. But he would have to be lucky. Drawing two cards doubles the chance of picking up what you want, but it

also doubles the chance of picking up useless cards that will only clutter up your hand.

Goldfinger played a more deliberate game, almost irritatingly slow. After drawing, he shuffled through his cards again and again before deciding on his discard.

On the third draw, Du Pont had improved his hand to the extent that he now needed only one of five cards to go down and out and catch his opponent with a handful of cards which would all count against him. As if Goldfinger knew the danger he was in, he went down for fifty and proceeded to make a canasta with three wild cards and four fives. He also got rid of some more melds and ended with only four cards in his hand. In any other circumstances it would have been ridiculously bad play. As it was, he had made some four hundred points instead of losing over a hundred; for, on the next draw Mr Du Pont filled his hand and, with most of the edge taken off his triumph by Goldfinger's escape, went down unseen with the necessary two canastas.

"By golly, I nearly screwed you that time." Mr Du Pont's voice had an edge of exasperation. "What in hell told you to cut an' run?"

Goldfinger said indifferently, "I smelled trouble." He added up his points, announced them and jotted them down, waiting for Mr Du Pont to do the same. Then he cut the cards and sat back and regarded Bond with polite interest.

"Will you be staying long, Mr Bomb?"

Bond smiled. "It's Bond, B-O-N-D. No, I have to go back to New York tonight."

"How sad." Goldfinger's mouth pursed in polite regret. He turned back to the cards and the game went on. Bond picked up his paper and gazed, unseeing, at the baseball scores, while he listened to the quiet routine of the game. Goldfinger won that hand and the next and the next. He won the game. There was a difference of one thousand five hundred points—one thousand five hundred dollars to Goldfinger.

"There it goes again!" It was the plaintive voice of Mr Du Pont.

Bond put down his paper. "Does he usually win?"

"Usually!" The word was a snort. "He always wins."

They cut again and Goldfinger began to deal.

Bond said, "Don't you cut for seats? I often find a

change of seat helps the luck. Hostage to fortune and so on." Goldfinger paused in his deal. He bent his gaze gravely on Bond. "Unfortunately, Mr Bond, that is not possible or could not play. As I explained to Mr Du Pont at our first game, I suffer from an obscure complaint—agoraphobia—the fear of open spaces. I cannot bear the open horizon. I must sit and face the hotel." The deal continued.

"Oh, I'm so sorry." Bond's voice was grave, interested. "That's a very rare disability. I've always been able to understand claustrophobia, but not the other way round. How did it come about?"

Goldfinger picked up his cards and began to arrange his hand. "I have no idea," he said equably.

Bond got up. "Well, I think I'll stretch my legs for a bit. See what's going on in the pool."

"You do just that," said Mr Du Pont jovially. "Just take it easy, James. Plenty of time to discuss business over lunch. I'll see if I can't dish it out to my friend Goldfinger this time instead of taking it. Be seeing you."

Goldfinger didn't look up from his cards. Bond strolled down the roof, past the occasional splayed-out body, to the rail at the far end that overlooked the pool. For a time he stood and contemplated the ranks of pink and brown and white flesh laid out below him on the steamer chairs. The heavy scent of suntan oil came up to him. There were a few children and young people in the pool. A man, obviously a professional diver, perhaps the swimming instructor, stood on the high-dive. He balanced on the balls of his feet, a muscled Greek god with golden hair. He bounced once, casually, and flew off and down, his arms held out like wings. Lazily they arrowed out to cleave the water for the body to pass through. The impact left only a brief turbulence. The diver jack-knifed up again, shaking his head boyishly. There was a smattering of applause. The man trudged slowly down the pool, his head submerged, his shoulders moving with casual power. Bond thought, good luck to you! You won't be able to keep this up for more than another five or six years. High-divers couldn't take it for long—the repeated shock to the skull. With ski-jumping, which had the same shattering effect on the frame, high-diving was the shortest-lived sport. Bond radioed to the diver, "Cash in quick! Get into films while the hair's still gold."

Bond turned and looked back down the roof towards the two Canasta players beneath the cliff of the hotel. So Goldfinger liked to face the hotel. Or was it that he liked Mr Du Pont to have his back to it? And why? Now, what was the number of Goldfinger's suite? No 200, the Hawaii Suite. Bond's on the top floor was 1200. So, all things being equal, Goldfinger's would be directly below Bond's, on the second floor, twenty yards or so above the roof of the Cabana Club—twenty yards from the card table. Bond counted down. He closely examined the frontage that should be Goldfinger's. Nothing. An empty sun balcony. An open door into the dark interior of the suite. Bond measured distances, angles. Yes, that's how it might be. That's how it must be! Clever Mr Goldfinger!

CHAPTER 4

OVER THE BARREL

AFTER LUNCHEON—the traditional shrimp cocktail, 'native' snapper with a minute paper cup of tartare sauce, roast prime ribs of beef *au jus*, and pineapple *surprise*—it was time for the siesta before meeting Goldfinger at three o'clock for the afternoon session.

Mr Du Pont, who had lost a further ten thousand dollars or more, confirmed that Goldfinger had a secretary. "Never seen her. Sticks to the suite. Probably just some chorine he's brought down for the ride." He smiled wetly. "I mean the daily ride. Why? You on to something?"

Bond was non-committal. "Can't tell yet. I probably won't be coming down this afternoon. Say I got bored watching—gone into the town." He paused. "But if my idea's right, don't be surprised at what may happen. If Goldfinger starts to behave oddly, just sit quiet and watch. I'm not promising anything. I think I've got him, but I may be wrong."

Mr Du Pont was enthusiastic. "Good for you, boyo!" he said effusively. "I just can't wait to see that bastard over the barrel. Damn his eyes!"

Bond took the elevator up to his suite. He went to his suitcase and extracted an M₃ Leica, an MC exposure meter, a K₂ filter and a flash-holder. He put a bulb in the holder and checked the camera. He went to his balcony, glanced at the sun to estimate where it would be at about three-thirty and went back into the sitting-room, leaving the door to the balcony open. He stood at the balcony door and aimed the exposure meter. The exposure was one-hundredth of a second. He set this on the Leica, put the shutter at f 11, and the distance at twelve feet. He clipped on a lens hood and took one picture to see that all was working. Then he wound on the film, slipped in the flash-holder and put the camera aside.

Bond went to his suitcase again and took out a thick book—*The Bible Designed to be Read as Literature*—opened it and extracted his Walther PPK in the Berns Martin holster. He slipped the holster inside his trouser band to the left. He tried one or two quick draws. They were satisfactory. He closely examined the geography of his suite, on the assumption that it would be exactly similar to the Hawaii. He visualized the scene that would almost certainly greet him when he came through the door of the suite downstairs. He tried his pass-key in the various locks and practised opening the doors noiselessly. Then he pulled a comfortable chair in front of the open balcony door and sat and smoked a cigarette while he gazed out across the sea and thought of how he would put things to Goldfinger when the time came.

At three-fifteen, Bond got up and went out on to the balcony and cautiously looked down at the two tiny figures across the square of green baize. He went back into the room and checked the exposure meter on the Leica. The light was the same. He slipped on the coat of his dark blue tropical worsted suit, straightened his tie and slung the strap of the Leica round his neck so that the camera hung at his chest. Then, with a last look round, he went out and along to the elevator. He rode down to the ground floor and examined the shop windows in the foyer. When the elevator had gone up again, he walked to the staircase and slowly climbed up two floors. The geography of the second floor was identical with the twelfth. Room 200 was where he had expected it to be. There was no one in sight. He took out his pass-key and silently opened the door and

closed it behind him. In the small lobby, a raincoat, a light camel-hair coat and a pale grey Homburg hung on hooks. Bond took his Leica firmly in his right hand, held it up close to his face and gently tried the door to the sitting-room. It was not locked. Bond eased it open.

Even before he could see what he expected to see he could hear the voice. It was a low, attractive, girl's voice, an English voice. It was saying, "Drew five and four. Completed canasta in fives with two twos. Discarding four. Has singletons in kings, knaves, nines, sevens."

Bond slid into the room.

The girl was sitting on two cushions on top of a table which had been pulled up a yard inside the open balcony door. She had needed the cushions to give her height. It was at the top of the afternoon heat and she was naked except for a black brassière and black silk briefs. She was swinging her legs in a bored fashion. She had just finished painting the nails on her left hand. Now she stretched the hand out in front of her to examine the effect. She brought the hand back close to her lips and blew on the nails. Her right hand reached sideways and put the brush back in the Revlon bottle on the table beside her. A few inches from her eyes were the eyepieces of a powerful-looking pair of binoculars supported on a tripod whose feet reached down between her sunburned legs to the floor. Jutting out from below the binoculars was a microphone from which wires led to a box about the size of a portable record player under the table. Other wires ran from the box to a gleaming indoor aerial on the sideboard against the wall.

The briefs tightened as she leant forward again and put her eyes to the binoculars. "Drew a queen and a king. Meld of queens. Can meld kings with a joker. Discarding seven." She switched off the microphone.

While she was concentrating, Bond stepped swiftly across the floor until he was almost behind her. There was a chair. He stood on it, praying it wouldn't squeak. Now he had the height to get the whole scene in focus. He put his eye to the viewfinder. Yes, there it was, all in line, the girl's head, the edge of the binoculars, the microphone and, twenty yards below, the two men at the table with Mr Du Pont's hand of cards held in front of him. Bond could distinguish the reds and the blacks. He pressed the button.

The sharp explosion of the bulb and the blinding flash of light forced a quick scream out of the girl. She swivelled round.

Bond stepped down off the chair. "Good afternoon."

"Whoryou? Whatyouwant?" The girl's hand was up to her mouth. Her eyes screamed at him.

"I've got what I want. Don't worry. It's all over now. And my name's Bond, James Bond."

Bond put his camera carefully down on the chair and came and stood in the radius of her scent. She was very beautiful. She had the palest blonde hair. It fell heavily to her shoulders, unfashionably long. Her eyes were deep blue against a lightly sunburned skin and her mouth was bold and generous and would have a lovely smile.

She stood up and took her hand away from her mouth. She was tall, perhaps five feet ten, and her arms and legs looked firm as if she might be a swimmer. Her breasts thrust against the black silk of the brassière.

Some of the fear had gone out of her eyes. She said in a low voice, "What are you going to do?"

"Nothing to you. I may tease Goldfinger a bit. Move over like a good girl and let me have a look."

Bond took the girl's place and looked through the glasses. The game was going on normally. Goldfinger showed no sign that his communications had broken down.

"Doesn't he mind not getting the signals? Will he stop playing?"

She said hesitatingly, "It's happened before when a plug pulled or something. He just waits for me to come through again."

Bond smiled at her. "Well, let's let him stew for a bit. Have a cigarette and relax," he held out a packet of Chesterfields. She took one. "Anyway it's time you did the nails on your right hand."

A smile flickered across her mouth. "How long were you there? You gave me a frightful shock."

"Not long, and I'm sorry about the shock. Goldfinger's been giving poor old Mr Du Pont shocks for a whole week."

"Yes," she said doubtfully. "I suppose it's really rather mean. But he's very rich, isn't he?"

"Oh yes. I shouldn't lose any sleep over Mr Du Pont. But Goldfinger might choose someone who can't afford it."

closed it behind him. In the small lobby, a raincoat, a light camel-hair coat and a pale grey Homburg hung on hooks. Bond took his Leica firmly in his right hand, held it up close to his face and gently tried the door to the sitting-room. It was not locked. Bond eased it open.

Even before he could see what he expected to see he could hear the voice. It was a low, attractive, girl's voice, an English voice. It was saying, "Drew five and four. Completed canasta in fives with two twos. Discarding four. Has singletons in kings, knaves, nines, sevens."

Bond slid into the room.

The girl was sitting on two cushions on top of a table which had been pulled up a yard inside the open balcony door. She had needed the cushions to give her height. It was at the top of the afternoon heat and she was naked except for a black brassière and black silk briefs. She was swinging her legs in a bored fashion. She had just finished painting the nails on her left hand. Now she stretched the hand out in front of her to examine the effect. She brought the hand back close to her lips and blew on the nails. Her right hand reached sideways and put the brush back in the Revlon bottle on the table beside her. A few inches from her eyes were the eyepieces of a powerful-looking pair of binoculars supported on a tripod whose feet reached down between her sunburned legs to the floor. Jutting out from below the binoculars was a microphone from which wires led to a box about the size of a portable record player under the table. Other wires ran from the box to a gleaming indoor aerial on the sideboard against the wall.

The briefs tightened as she leant forward again and put her eyes to the binoculars. "Drew a queen and a king. Meld of queens. Can meld kings with a joker. Discarding seven." She switched off the microphone.

While she was concentrating, Bond stepped swiftly across the floor until he was almost behind her. There was a chair. He stood on it, praying it wouldn't squeak. Now he had the height to get the whole scene in focus. He put his eye to the viewfinder. Yes, there it was, all in line, the girl's head, the edge of the binoculars, the microphone and, twenty yards below, the two men at the table with Mr Du Pont's hand of cards held in front of him. Bond could distinguish the reds and the blacks. He pressed the button.

The sharp explosion of the bulb and the blinding flash of light forced a quick scream out of the girl. She swivelled round.

Bond stepped down off the chair. "Good afternoon."

"Whoryou? Whatyouwant?" The girl's hand was up to her mouth. Her eyes screamed at him.

"I've got what I want. Don't worry. It's all over now. And my name's Bond, James Bond."

Bond put his camera carefully down on the chair and came and stood in the radius of her scent. She was very beautiful. She had the palest blonde hair. It fell heavily to her shoulders, unfashionably long. Her eyes were deep blue against a lightly sunburned skin and her mouth was bold and generous and would have a lovely smile.

She stood up and took her hand away from her mouth. She was tall, perhaps five feet ten, and her arms and legs looked firm as if she might be a swimmer. Her breasts thrust against the black silk of the brassière.

Some of the fear had gone out of her eyes. She said in a low voice, "What are you going to do?"

"Nothing to you. I may tease Goldfinger a bit. Move over like a good girl and let me have a look."

Bond took the girl's place and looked through the glasses. The game was going on normally. Goldfinger showed no sign that his communications had broken down.

"Doesn't he mind not getting the signals? Will he stop playing?"

She said hesitatingly, "It's happened before when a plug pulled or something. He just waits for me to come through again."

Bond smiled at her. "Well, let's let him stew for a bit. Have a cigarette and relax," he held out a packet of Chesterfields. She took one. "Anyway it's time you did the nails on your right hand."

A smile flickered across her mouth. "How long were you there? You gave me a frightful shock."

"Not long, and I'm sorry about the shock. Goldfinger's been giving poor old Mr Du Pont shocks for a whole week."

"Yes," she said doubtfully. "I suppose it's really rather mean. But he's very rich, isn't he?"

"Oh yes. I shouldn't lose any sleep over Mr Du Pont. But Goldfinger might choose someone who can't afford it."

Anyway, he's a zillionaire himself. Why does he do it? He's crawling with money."

Animation flooded back into her face. "I know. I simply can't understand him. It's a sort of mania with him, making money. He can't leave it alone. I've asked him why and all he says is that one's a fool not to make money when the odds are right. He's always going on about the same thing, getting the odds right. When he talked me into doing this," she waved her cigarette at the binoculars, "and I asked him why on earth he bothered, took these stupid risks, all he said was, 'That's the second lesson. When the odds aren't right, make them right.'"

Bond said, "Well, it's lucky for him I'm not Pinkertons or the Miami Police Department."

The girl shrugged her shoulders. "Oh, that wouldn't worry him. He'd just buy you off. He can buy anyone off. No one can resist gold."

"What do you mean?"

She said indifferently, "He always carries a million dollars' worth of gold about with him except when he's going through the Customs. Then he just carries a belt full of gold coins round his stomach. Otherwise it's in thin sheets in the bottom and sides of his suitcases. They're really gold suitcases covered with leather."

"They must weigh a ton."

"He always travels by car, one with special springs. And his chauffeur is a huge man. He carries them. No one else touches them."

"Why does he carry around all that gold?"

"Just in case he needs it. He knows that gold will buy him anything he wants. It's all twenty-four carat. And anyway he loves gold, really loves it like people love jewels or stamps or—well," she smiled, "women."

Bond smiled back. "Does he love you?"

She blushed and said indignantly, "Certainly not." Then, more reasonably, "Of course you can think anything you like. But really he doesn't. I mean, I think he likes people to *think* that we—that I'm—that it's a question of love and all that. You know. He's not very prepossessing and I suppose it's a question of—well—of vanity or something."

"Yes, I see. So you're just a kind of secretary?"

"Companion," she corrected him. "I don't have to type

or anything." She suddenly put her hand up to her mouth. "Oh, but I shouldn't be telling you all this! You won't tell him, will you? He'd fire me." Fright came into her eyes. "Or something. I don't know what he'd do. He's the sort of man who might do anything."

"Of course I won't tell. But this can't be much of a life for you. Why do you do it?"

She said tartly, "A hundred pounds a week and all this," she waved at the room, "doesn't grow on trees. I save up. When I've saved enough I shall go."

Bond wondered if Goldfinger would let her. Wouldn't she know too much? He looked at the beautiful face, the splendid, unselfconscious body. She might not suspect it, but, for his money, she was in very bad trouble with this man.

The girl was fidgeting. Now she said with an embarrassed laugh, "I don't think I'm very properly dressed. Can't I go and put something on over these?"

Bond wasn't sure he could trust her. It wasn't he who was paying the hundred pounds a week. He said airily, "You look fine. Just as respectable as those hundreds of people round the pool. Anyway," he stretched, "it's about time to light a fire under Mr Goldfinger."

Bond had been glancing down at the game from time to time. It seemed to be proceeding normally. Bond bent again to the binoculars. Already Mr Du Pont seemed to be a new man, his gestures were expansive, the half-profile of his pink face was full of animation. While Bond watched, he took a fistful of cards out of his hand and spread them down—a pure canasta in kings. Bond tilted the binoculars up an inch. The big red-brown moon face was impassive, uninterested. Mr Goldfinger was waiting patiently for the odds to adjust themselves back in his favour. While Bond watched, he put up a hand to the hearing aid, pushing the amplifier more firmly into his ear, ready for the signals to come through again.

Bond stepped back. "Neat little machine," he commented. "What are you transmitting on?"

"He told me, but I can't remember." She screwed up her eyes. "A hundred and seventy somethings. Would it be mega-somethings?"

"Megacycles. Might be, but I'd be surprised if he doesn't

get a lot of taxicabs and police messages mixed up with your talk. Must have fiendish concentration." Bond grinned. "Now then. All set? It's time to pull the rug away."

Suddenly she reached out and put a hand on his sleeve. There was a Claddagh ring on the middle finger—two gold hands clasped round a gold heart. There were tears in her voice. "Must you? Can't you leave him alone? I don't know what he'll do to me. Please." She hesitated. She was blushing furiously. "And I like you. It's a long time since I've seen someone like you. Couldn't you just stay here for a little more?" She looked down at the ground. "If only you'd leave him alone I'd do—" the words came out in a rush—"I'd do *anything*."

Bond smiled. He took the girl's hand off his arm and squeezed it. "Sorry. I'm being paid to do this job and I must do it. Anyway—" his voice went flat—"I want to do it. It's time someone cut Mr Goldfinger down to size. Ready?"

Without waiting for an answer he bent to the binoculars. They were still focused on Goldfinger. Bond cleared his throat. He watched the big face carefully. His hand felt for the microphone switch and pressed it down.

There must have been a whisper of static in the deaf aid. Goldfinger's expression didn't alter, but he slowly raised his face to heaven and then down again, as if in benediction.

Bond spoke softly, menacingly into the microphone. "Now hear me, Goldfinger." He paused. Not a flicker of expression, but Goldfinger bent his head a fraction as if listening. He studied his cards intently, his hands quite still.

"This is James Bond speaking. Remember me? The game's finished and it's time to pay. I have a photograph of the whole set-up, blonde, binoculars, microphone and you and your hearing aid. This photograph will not go to the FBI and Scotland Yard so long as you obey me exactly. Nod your head if you understand."

The face was still expressionless. Slowly the big round head bent forward and then straightened itself.

"Put your cards down face upwards on the table."

The hands went down. They opened and the cards slid off the fingers on to the table.

"Take out your cheque book and write a cheque to cash for fifty thousand dollars. That is made up as follows, thirty-five you have taken from Mr Du Pont. Ten for my fee. The

extra five for wasting so much of Mr Du Pont's valuable time."

Bond watched to see that his order was being obeyed. He took a glance at Mr Du Pont. Mr Du Pont was leaning forward, gaping.

Mr Goldfinger slowly detached the cheque and countersigned it on the back.

"Right. Now jot this down on the back of your cheque book and see you get it right. Book me a compartment on the Silver Meteor to New York tonight. Have a bottle of vintage champagne on ice in the compartment and plenty of caviar sandwiches. The best caviar. And keep away from me. And no monkey business. The photograph will be in the mails with a full report to be opened and acted upon if I don't show up in good health in New York tomorrow. Nod if you understand."

Again the big head came slowly down and up again. Now there were traces of sweat on the high, unlined forehead.

"Right, now hand the cheque across to Mr Du Pont and say, 'I apologize humbly. I have been cheating you.' Then you can go."

Bond watched the hand go across and drop the cheque in front of Mr Du Pont. The mouth opened and spoke. The eyes were placid, slow. Goldfinger had relaxed. It was only money. He had paid his way out.

"Just a moment, Goldfinger, you're not through yet." Bond glanced up at the girl. She was looking at him strangely. There was misery and fear but also a look of submissiveness, of longing.

"What's your name?"

"Jill Masterton."

Goldfinger had stood up, was turning away. Bond said sharply, "Stop."

Goldfinger stopped in mid-stride. Now his eyes looked up at the balcony. They had opened wide, as when Bond had first met him. Their hard, level, X-ray gaze seemed to find the lenses of the binoculars, travel down them and through Bond's eyes to the back of his skull. They seemed to say, "I shall remember this, Mr Bond."

Bond said softly, "I'd forgotten. One last thing. I shall be taking a hostage for the ride to New York. Miss Masterton. See that she's at the train. Oh, and make that compartment a drawing-room. That's all."

CHAPTER 5

NIGHT DUTY

IT WAS a week later. Bond stood at the open window of the seventh-floor office of the tall building in Regent's Park that is the headquarters of the Secret Service. London lay asleep under a full moon that rode swiftly over the town through a shoal of herring-bone clouds. Big Ben sounded three. One of the telephones rang in the dark room. Bond turned and moved quickly to the central desk and the pool of light cast by the green shaded reading-lamp. He picked up the black telephone from the rank of four.

He said, "Duty officer."

"Station H, sir."

"Put them on."

There was the echoing buzz and twang of the usual bad radio connection with Hongkong. Why were there always sunspots over China? A sing-song voice asked, "Universal Export?"

"Yes."

A deep, close voice—London—said, "You're through to Hongkong. Speak up, please."

Bond said impatiently, "Clear the line, please."

The sing-song voice said, "You're through now. Speak up, please."

"Hullo! Hullo! Universal Export?"

"Yes."

"Dickson speaking. Can you hear me?"

"Yes."

"That cable I sent you about the shipment of mangoes. Fruit. You know?"

"Yes. Got it here." Bond pulled the file towards him. He knew what it was about. Station H wanted some limpet mines to put paid to three Communist spy junks that were using Macao to intercept British freighters and search them for refugees from China.

"Must have payment by the tenth."

That would mean that the junks were leaving, or else that the guards on the junks would be doubled after that date, or some other emergency.

Bond said briefly, "Wilco."

"Thanks. 'Bye."

"'Bye." Bond put down the receiver. He picked up the green receiver and dialled Q Branch and talked to the section duty officer. It would be all right. There was a BOAC Britannia leaving in the morning. Q Branch would see that the crate caught the plane.

Bond sat back. He reached for a cigarette and lit it. He thought of the badly air-conditioned little office on the waterfront in Hongkong, saw the sweat marks on the white shirt of 279, whom he knew well and who had just called himself Dickson. Now 279 would probably be talking to his number two: "It's okay. London says can do. Let's just go over this ops. schedule again." Bond smiled wryly. Better they than he. He'd never liked being up against the Chinese. There were too many of them. Station H might be stirring up a hornets' nest, but M had decided it was time to show the opposition that the Service in Hongkong hadn't quite gone out of business.

When, three days before, M had first told him his name was down for night duty, Bond hadn't taken to the idea. He had argued that he didn't know enough about the routine work of the stations, that it was too responsible a job to give a man who had been in the double-O section for six years and who had forgotten all he had ever known about station work.

"You'll soon pick it up," M had said unsympathetically. "If you get in trouble there are the duty section officers or the Chief of Staff—or me, for the matter of that." (Bond had smiled at the thought of waking M up in the middle of the night because some man in Cairo or Tokyo was in a flap.) "Anyway, I've decided. I want all senior officers to do their spell of routine." M had looked frostily across at Bond. "Matter of fact, 007, I had the Treasury on to me the other day. Their liaison man thinks the double-O section is redundant. Says that kind of thing is out of date. I couldn't bother to argue"—M's voice was mild. "Just told him he was mistaken." (Bond could visualize the scene.) "However,

won't do any harm for you to have some extra duties now you're back in London. Keep you from getting stale."

And Bond wasn't minding it. He was half way through his first week and so far it had just been a question of common sense or passing routine problems on down to the sections. He rather liked the peaceful room and knowing everybody's secrets and being occasionally fed coffee and sandwiches by one of the pretty girls from the canteen.

On the first night the girl had brought him tea. Bond had looked at her severely. "I don't drink tea. I hate it. It's mud. Moreover it's one of the main reasons for the downfall of the British Empire. Be a good girl and make me some coffee." The girl had giggled and scurried off to spread Bond's dictum in the canteen. From then on he had got his coffee. The expression 'a cup of mud' was seeping through the building.

A second reason why Bond enjoyed the long vacuum of night duty was that it gave him time to get on with a project he had been toying with for more than a year—a handbook of all secret methods of unarmed combat. It was to be called *Stay Alive!* It would contain the best of all that had been written on the subject by the Secret Services of the world. Bond had told no one of the project, but he hoped that, if he could finish it, M would allow it to be added to the short list of Service manuals which contained the tricks and techniques of Secret Intelligence.

Bond had borrowed the original textbooks, or where necessary, translations, from Records. Most of the books had been captured from enemy agents or organizations. Some had been presented to M by sister Services such as OSS, CIA and the Deuxième. Now Bond drew towards him a particular prize, a translation of the manual, entitled simply *Defence*, issued to operatives of SMERSH, the Soviet organization of vengeance and death.

That night he was half way through Chapter Two, whose title, freely translated, was 'Come-along and Restraint Holds'. Now he went back to the book and read for half an hour through the sections dealing with the conventional 'Wrist Come-along', 'Arm Lock Come-along', 'Forearm Lock', 'Head Hold' and 'Use of Neck Pressure Points'.

After half an hour, Bond thrust the typescript away from him. He got up and went across to the window and

stood looking out. There was a nauseating toughness in the blunt prose the Russians used. It had brought on another of the attacks of revulsion to which Bond had succumbed ten days before at Miami Airport. What was wrong with him? Couldn't he take it any more? Was he going soft, or was he only stale? Bond stood for a while watching the moon riding, careering, through the clouds. Then he shrugged his shoulders and went back to his desk. He decided that he was as fed up with the variations of violent physical behaviour as a psychoanalyst must become with the mental aberrations of his patients.

Bond read again the passage that had revolted him: 'A drunken woman can also usually be handled by using the thumb and forefinger to grab the lower lip. By pinching hard and twisting, as the pull is made, the woman will come along.'

Bond grunted. The obscene delicacy of that 'thumb and forefinger'! Bond lit a cigarette and stared into the filament of the desk light, switching his mind to other things, wishing that a signal would come in or the telephone ring. Another five hours to go before the nine o'clock report to the Chief of Staff or to M, if M happened to come in early. There was something nagging at his mind, something he had wanted to check on when he had the time. What was it? What had triggered off the reminder? Yes, that was it, 'forefinger'—Goldfinger. He would see if Records had anything on the man.

Bond picked up the green telephone and dialled Records.

"Doesn't ring a bell, sir. I'll check and call you back."

Bond put down the receiver.

It had been a wonderful trip up in the train. They had eaten the sandwiches and drunk the champagne and then, to the rhythm of the giant diesels pounding out the miles, they had made long, slow love in the narrow berth. It had been as if the girl was starved of physical love. She had woken him twice more in the night with soft demanding caresses, saying nothing, just reaching for his hard, lean body. The next day she had twice pulled down the roller blinds to shut out the hard light and had taken him by the hand and said, "Love me, James" as if she was a child asking for a sweet.

Even now Bond could hear the quick silver poem of the

level-crossing bells, the wail of the big windhorn out front and the quiet outside clamour at the stations when they lay and waited for the sensual gallop of the wheels to begin again.

Jill Masterton had said that Goldfinger had been relaxed, indifferent over his defeat. He had told the girl to tell Bond that he would be over in England in a week's time and would like to have that game of golf at Sandwich. Nothing else—no threats, no curses. He had said he would expect the girl back by the next train. Jill had told Bond she would go. Bond had argued with her. But she was not frightened of Goldfinger. What could he do to her? And it was a good job.

Bond had decided to give her the ten thousand dollars Mr Du Pont had shuffled into his hand with a stammer of thanks and congratulations. Bond made her take the money. "I don't want it," Bond had said. "Wouldn't know what to do with it. Anyway, keep it as mad money in case you want to get away in a hurry. It ought to be a million. I shall never forget last night and today."

Bond had taken her to the station and had kissed her once hard on the lips and had gone away. It hadn't been love, but a quotation had come into Bond's mind as his cab moved out of Pennsylvania station: 'Some love is fire, some love is rust. But the finest, cleanest love is lust.' Neither had had regrets. Had they committed a sin? If so, which one? A sin against chastity? Bond smiled to himself. There was a quotation for that too, and from a saint—Saint Augustine: 'Oh Lord, give me Chastity. But don't give it yet!'

The green telephone rang. "Three Goldfingers, sir, but two of them are dead. The third's a Russian post office in Geneva. Got a hairdressing business. Slips the messages into the right-hand coat pocket when he brushes the customers down. He lost a leg at Stalingrad. Any good, sir? There's plenty more on him."

"No thanks. That couldn't be my man."

"We could put a trace through CID Records in the morning. Got a picture, sir?"

Bond remembered the Leica film. He hadn't even bothered to have it developed. It would be quicker to mock up the man's face on the Identicast. He said, "Is the Identicast room free?"

"Yes, sir. And I can operate it for you if you like."

"Thanks. I'll come down."

Bond told the switchboard to let heads of sections know where he would be and went out and took the lift down to Records on the first floor.

The big building was extraordinarily quiet at night. Beneath the silence, there was a soft whisper of machinery and hidden life—the muffled clack of a typewriter as Bond passed a door, a quickly suppressed stammer of radio static as he passed another, the soft background whine of the ventilation system. It gave you the impression of being in a battleship in harbour.

The Records duty officer was already at the controls of the Identicast in the projection room. He said to Bond, "Could you give me the main lines of the face, sir? That'll help me leave out the slides that are obviously no good."

Bond did so and sat back and watched the lighted screen.

The Identicast is a machine for building up an approximate picture of a suspect—or of someone who has perhaps only been glimpsed in a street or a train or in a passing car. It works on the magic lantern principle. The operator flashes on the screen various head-shapes and sizes. When one is recognized it stays on the screen. Then various hair-cuts are shown, and then all the other features follow and are chosen one by one—different shapes of eyes, noses, chins, mouths, eyebrows, cheeks, ears. In the end there is the whole picture of a face, as near as the scanner can remember it, and it is photographed and put on record.

It took some time to put together Goldfinger's extraordinary face, but the final result was an approximate likeness in monochrome. Bond dictated one or two notes about the sunburn, the colour of the hair and the expression of the eyes, and the job was done.

"Wouldn't like to meet that on a dark night," commented the man from Records. "I'll put it through to CID when they come on duty. You should get the answer by lunch time."

Bond went back to the seventh floor. On the other side of the world it was around midnight. Eastern stations were closing down. There was a flurry of signals that had to be dealt with, the night's log to be written up, and then it was eight o'clock. Bond telephoned the canteen for his break-

fast. He had just finished it when there came the harsh purr of the red telephone. M! Why the hell had he got in half an hour early?

"Yes, sir."

"Come up to my office, 007. I want to have a word before you go off duty."

"Sir." Bond put the telephone back. He slipped on his coat and ran a hand through his hair, told the switchboard where he would be, took the night log and went up in the lift to the eighth and top floor. Neither the desirable Miss Money Penny nor the Chief of Staff was on duty. Bond knocked on M's door and went in.

"Sit down, 007." M was going through the pipe-lighting routine. He looked pink and well scrubbed. The lined sailor's face above the stiff white collar and loosely tied spotted bow tie was damnably brisk and cheerful. Bond was conscious of the black stubble on his own chin and of the all-night look of his skin and clothes. He sharpened his mind.

"Quiet night?" M had got his pipe going. His hard, healthy eyes regarded Bond attentively.

"Pretty quiet, sir. Station H—"

M raised his left hand an inch or two. "Never mind. I'll read all about it in the log. Here, I'll take it."

Bond handed over the Top Secret folder. M put it to one side. He smiled one of his rare, rather sardonic, bitten-off smiles. "Things change, 007. I'm taking you off night duty for the present."

Bond's answering smile was taut. He felt the quickening of the pulse he had so often experienced in this room. M had got something for him. He said, "I was just getting into it, sir."

"Quite. Have plenty of opportunity later on. Something's come up. Odd business. Not really your line of country, except for one particular angle which"—M jerked his pipe sideways in a throwaway gesture—"may not be an angle at all."

Bond sat back. He said nothing, waiting.

"Had dinner with the Governor of the Bank last night. One's always hearing something new. At least, all this was new to me. Gold—the seamy side of the stuff. Smuggling, counterfeiting, all that. Hadn't occurred to me that the Bank

England knew so much about crooks. Suppose it's part of the Bank's job to protect our currency." M jerked his eyebrows up. "Know anything about gold?"

"No, sir."

"Well, you will by this afternoon. You've got an appointment with a man called Colonel Smithers at the Bank at four o'clock. That give you enough time to get some sleep?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good. Seems that this man Smithers is head of the Bank's research department. From what the Governor told me, that's nothing more or less than a spy system. First time I knew they had one. Just shows what watertight compartments we all work in. Anyway, Smithers and his chaps keep an eye out for anything fishy in the banking world—particularly any monkeying about with our currency and bullion reserves and what not. There was that business the other day of the Italians who were counterfeiting sovereigns. Making them out of real gold. Right carats and all that. But apparently a sovereign or a French napoleon is worth much more than its melted-down value in gold. Don't ask me why. Smithers can tell you that if you're interested. Anyway, the Bank went after these people with a whole battery of lawyers—it wasn't technically a criminal offence—and, after losing in the Italian courts, they finally nailed them in Switzerland. You probably read about it. Then there was that business of dollar balances in Beirut. Made quite a stir in the papers. Couldn't understand it myself. Some crack in the fence we put round our currency. The wide City boys had found it. Well, it's Smithers's job to smell out that kind of racket. The reason the Governor told me all this is because for years, almost since the war apparently, Smithers has had a bee in his bonnet about some big gold leak out of England. Mostly deduction, plus some kind of instinct. Smithers admits he's got damned little to go on, but he's impressed the Governor enough for him to get permission from the PM to call us in." M broke off. He looked quizzically at Bond. "Ever wondered who are the richest men in England?"

"No, sir."

"Well, have a guess. Or rather, put it like this: Who are the richest Englishmen?"

Bond searched his mind. There were a lot of men who

sounded rich or who were made to sound rich by the newspapers. But who really *had* it, liquid, in the bank? He had to say something. He said hesitatingly, "Well, sir, there's Sassoon. Then that shipping man who keeps to himself—er—Ellerman. They say Lord Cowdray is very rich. There are the bankers—Rothschilds, Barings, Hambros. There was Williamson, the diamond man. Oppenheimer in South Africa. Some of the dukes may still have a lot of money." Bond's voice trailed away.

"Not bad. Not bad at all. But you've missed out the joker in the pack. Man I'd never thought of until the Governor brought up his name. He's the richest of the lot. Man called Goldfinger, Auric Goldfinger."

Bond couldn't help himself. He laughed sharply.

"What's the matter?" M's voice was testy. "What the hell is there to laugh about?"

"I'm sorry, sir." Bond got hold of himself. "The truth is, only last night I was building his face up on the Identicast." He glanced at his watch. In a strangled voice he said, "Be on its way to CID Records. Asked for a Trace on him."

M was getting angry. "What the hell's all this about? Stop behaving like a bloody schoolboy."

Bond said soberly, "Well, sir, it's like this . . ." Bond told the story, leaving nothing out.

M's face cleared. He listened with all his attention, leaning forward across the desk. When Bond had finished, M sat back in his chair. He said "Well, well . . . well" on a diminishing scale. He put his hands behind his head and gazed for minutes at the ceiling.

Bond could feel the laughter coming on again. How would the CID word the resounding snub he would get in the course of the day? He was brought sharply back to earth by M's next words. "By the way, what happened to that ten thousand dollars?"

"Gave it to the girl, sir."

"Really! Why not to the White Cross?"

The White Cross Fund was for the families of Secret Service men and women who were killed on duty.

"Sorry, sir." Bond was not prepared to argue that one.

"Humpf." M had never approved of Bond's womanizing. It was anathema to his Victorian soul. He decided to let it pass. He said, "Well, that's all for now, 007. You'll be

hearing all about it this afternoon. Funny about Goldfinger. Odd chap. Seen him once or twice at Blades. He plays bridge there when he's in England. He's the chap the Bank of England's after." M paused. He looked mildly across the table at Bond. "As from this moment, so are you."

CHAPTER 6

TALK OF GOLD

BOND WALKED up the steps and through the fine bronze portals and into the spacious, softly echoing entrance hall of the Bank of England and looked around him. Under his feet glittered the brilliant golden patterns of the Boris Anrep mosaics; beyond, through twenty-foot-high arched windows, green grass and geraniums blazed in the central courtyard. To right and left were spacious vistas of polished Hopton Wood stone. Over all hung the neutral smell of air-conditioned air and the heavy, grave atmosphere of immense riches.

One of the athletic-looking, pink frock-coated commissionaires came up to him. "Yes, sir?"

"Colonel Smithers?"

"Commander Bond, sir? This way please." The commissionaire moved off to the right between the pillars. The bronze doors of a discreetly hidden lift stood open. The lift rose a few feet to the first floor. Now there was a long panelled corridor ending in a tall Adam window. The floor was close-carpeted in beige Wilton. The commissionaire knocked at the last of several finely carved oak doors that were just so much taller and more elegant than ordinary doors. A grey-haired woman was sitting at a desk. She looked as if she had once taken a double first. The walls of the room were lined with grey metal filing cabinets. The woman had been writing on a quarto pad of yellow memorandum paper. She smiled with a hint of conspiracy, picked up a telephone and dialled a number. "Commander Bond is here." She put the telephone back and stood up. "Will you come this way?" She crossed the room to a door covered

with green baize and held it open for Bond to go through. Colonel Smithers had risen from his desk. He said gravely, "Nice of you to have come. Won't you sit down?" Bond took the chair. "Smoke?" Colonel Smithers pushed forward a silver box of Senior Service and himself sat down and began to fill a pipe. Bond took a cigarette and lit it.

Colonel Smithers looked exactly like someone who would be called Colonel Smithers. He had obviously been a colonel, probably on the staff, and he had the smooth, polished, basically serious mien that fitted his name. But for his horn-rimmed glasses, he might have been an efficient, not very well-fed courtier in a royal household.

Bond felt boredom gathering in the corners of the room. He said encouragingly, "It seems that you are to tell me all about gold."

"So I understand. I had a note from the Governor. I gather I need keep nothing from you. Of course you understand"—Colonel Smithers looked over Bond's right shoulder—"that most of what I shall have to say will be confidential." The eyes swept quickly across Bond's face.

Bond's face was stony.

Colonel Smithers felt the silence that Bond had intended he should feel. He looked up, saw that he had put his foot in it, and tried to make amends. "Obviously I needn't have mentioned the point. A man with your training..."

Bond said, "We all think our own secrets are the only ones that matter. You're probably right to remind me. Other people's secrets are never quite as important as one's own. But you needn't worry. I shall discuss things with my chief but with no one else."

"Quite, quite, Nice of you to take it that way. In the Bank one gets into the habit of being over-discreet. Now then," Colonel Smithers scurried for cover into his subject. "This business of gold. I take it it's not a matter you've thought about a great deal?"

"I know it when I see it."

"Aha, yes—well now, the great thing to remember about gold is that it's the most valuable and most easily marketable commodity in the world. You can go to any town in the world, almost to any village, and hand over a piece of gold and get goods or services in exchange. Right?" Colonel Smithers's voice had taken on a new briskness. His eyes were

alight. He had his lecture pat. Bond sat back. He was prepared to listen to anyone who was master of his subject, any subject. "And the next thing to remember," Colonel Smithers held up his pipe in warning, "is that gold is virtually untraceable. Sovereigns have no serial numbers. If gold bars have Mint marks stamped on them the marks can be shaved off or the bar can be melted down and made into a new bar. That makes it almost impossible to check on the whereabouts of gold, or its origins, or its movements round the world. In England, for instance, we at the Bank can only count the gold in our own vaults, in the vaults of other banks and at the Mint, and make a rough guess at the amounts held by the jewellery trade and the pawnbroking fraternity."

"Why are you so anxious to know how much gold there is in England?"

"Because gold and currencies backed by gold are the foundation of our international credit. We can only tell what the true strength of the pound is, and other countries can only tell it, by knowing the amount of valuta we have behind our currency. And my main job, Mr Bond"—Colonel Smithers's bland eyes had become unexpectedly sharp—"is to watch for any leakage of gold out of England—out of anywhere in the sterling area. And when I spot a leakage, an escape of gold towards some country where it can be exchanged more profitably than at our official buying price, it is my job to put the CID Gold Squad on to the fugitive gold and try to get it back into our vaults, plug the leak and arrest the people responsible. And the trouble is, Mr Bond"—Colonel Smithers gave a forlorn shrug of the shoulders—"that gold attracts the biggest, the most ingenious criminals. They are very hard, very hard indeed, to catch."

"Isn't all this only a temporary phase? Why should this shortage of gold go on? They seem to be digging it out of Africa fast enough. Isn't there enough to go round? Isn't it just like any other black market that disappears when the supplies are stepped up, like the penicillin traffic after the war?"

"I'm afraid not, Mr Bond. It isn't quite as easy as that. The population of the world is increasing at the rate of five thousand four hundred every hour of the day. A small percentage of those people become gold hoarders, people who are frightened of currencies, who like to bury some

sovereigns in the garden or under the bed. Another percentage needs gold fillings for their teeth. Others need gold-rimmed spectacles, jewellery, engagement rings. All these new people will be taking tons of gold off the market every year. New industries need gold wire, gold plating, amalgams of gold. Gold has extraordinary properties which are being put to new uses every day. It is brilliant, malleable, ductile, almost unalterable and more dense than any of the common metals except platinum. There's no end to its uses. But it has two defects. It isn't hard enough. It wears out quickly, leaves itself on the linings of our pockets and in the sweat of our skins. Every year, the world's stock is invisibly reduced by friction. I said that gold has two defects." Colonel Smithers looked sad. "The other and by far the major defect is that it is the talisman of fear. Fear, Mr Bond, takes gold out of circulation and hoards it against the evil day. In a period of history when every tomorrow may be the evil day, it is fair enough to say that a fat proportion of the gold that is dug out of one corner of the earth is at once buried again in another corner."

Bond smiled at Colonel Smithers's eloquence. This man lived gold, thought gold, dreamed gold. Well, it was an interesting subject. He might just as well wallow in the stuff. In the days when Bond had been after the diamond smugglers he had had first to educate himself in the fascination, the myth of the stones. He said, "What else ought I to know before we get down to your immediate problem?"

"You're not bored? Well, you were suggesting that gold production was so vast nowadays that it ought to take care of all these various consumers. Unfortunately that is not so. In fact the gold content of the world is being worked out. You may think that large areas of the world have still to be explored for gold. You would be mistaken. Broadly speaking, there only remains the land under the sea and the sea itself, which has a notable gold content. People have been scratching the surface of the world for gold for thousands of years. There were the great gold treasures of Egypt and Mycenae, Montezuma and the Incas. Croesus and Midas emptied the Middle Eastern territories of gold. Europe was worked for it—the valleys of the Rhine and the Po, Malaga and the plains of Granada. Cyprus was emptied, and the Balkans. India got the fever. Ants coming up from under the earth carrying

grains of gold led the Indians to their alluvial fields. The Romans worked Wales and Devon and Cornwall. In the Middle Ages there were the finds in Mexico and Peru. These were followed by the opening up of the Gold Coast, then called Negro-land, and after that came the Americas. The famous gold rushes of the Yukon and Eldorado, and the rich strikes at Eureka sounded off the first modern Gold Age. Meanwhile, in Australia, Bendigo and Ballarat had come into production, and the Russian deposits at Lena and in the Urals were making Russia the largest gold producer in the world in the middle of the nineteenth century. Then came the second modern Gold Age—the discoveries on the Witwatersrand. These were helped by the new method of cyaniding instead of separation of the gold from the rock by mercury. Today we are in the third Gold Age with the opening up of the Orange Free State deposits." Colonel Smithers threw up his hands. "Now, gold is pouring out of the earth. Why, the whole production of the Klondike and the Homestake and Eldorado, which were once the wonder of the world, would only add up to two or three years of today's production from Africa! Just to show you, from 1500 to 1900, when approximate figures were kept, the whole world produced about eighteen thousand tons of gold. From 1900 to today we have dug up forty-one thousand tons! At this rate, Mr Bond," Colonel Smithers leaned forward earnestly, "—and please don't quote me—but I wouldn't be surprised if in fifty years' time we have not totally exhausted the gold content of the earth!"

Bond, smothered by this cataract of gold history, found no difficulty in looking as grave as Colonel Smithers. He said, "You certainly make a fascinating story of it. Perhaps the position isn't as bad as you think. They're already mining oil under the sea. Perhaps they'll find a way of mining gold. Now, about this smuggling."

The telephone rang. Colonel Smithers impatiently snatched up the receiver. "Smithers speaking." He listened, irritation growing on his face. "I'm sure I sent you a note about the summer fixtures, Miss Philby. The next match is on Saturday against the Discount Houses." He listened again. "Well, if Mrs Flake won't play goals, I'm afraid she'll have to stand down. It's the only position on the field we've got for her. Everybody can't play centre forward. Yes, please do. Say

I'll be greatly obliged if just this once. I'm sure she'll be very good—right figure and all that. Thank you, Miss Philby."

Colonel Smithers took out a handkerchief and mopped his forehead. "Sorry about that. Sports and welfare are becoming almost too much of a fetish at the Bank. I've just had the women's hockey team thrown into my lap. As if I hadn't got enough to do with the annual gymkhana coming on. However—" Colonel Smithers waved these minor irritations aside—"as you say, time to get on to the smuggling. Well, to begin with, and taking only England and the sterling area, it's a very big business indeed. We employ three thousand staff at the Bank, Mr Bond, and of those no less than one thousand work in the exchange control department. Of those at least five hundred, including my little outfit, are engaged in controlling the illicit movements of valuta, the attempts to smuggle or to evade the Exchange Control Regulations."

"That's a lot." Bond measured it against the Secret Service which had a total force of two thousand. "Can you give me an example of smuggling? In gold. I can't understand these dollar swindles."

"All right." Colonel Smithers now talked in the soft, tired voice of an overworked man in the service of his Government. It was the voice of the specialist in a particular line of law enforcement. It said that he knew most things connected with that line and that he could make a good guess at all the rest. Bond knew the voice well, the voice of the first-class Civil Servant. Despite his prosiness, Bond was beginning to take to Colonel Smithers. "All right. Supposing you have a bar of gold in your pocket about the size of a couple of packets of Players. Weight about five and a quarter pounds. Never mind for the moment where you got it from—stole it or inherited it or something. That'll be twenty-four carat—what we call a thousand fine. Now, the law says you have to sell that to the Bank of England at the controlled price of twelve pounds ten per ounce. That would make it worth around a thousand pounds. But you're greedy. You've got a friend going to India or perhaps you're on good terms with an airline pilot or a steward on the Far East run. All you have to do is cut your bar into thin sheets or plates—you'd soon find someone to do this for you—and sew the plates—they'd be smaller than

playing cards—into a cotton belt, and pay your friend a commission to wear it. You could easily afford a hundred pounds for the job. Your friend flies off to Bombay and goes to the first bullion dealer in the bazaar. He will be given one thousand seven hundred pounds for your five-pound bar and you're a richer man than you might have been. Mark you," Colonel Smithers waved his pipe airily, "that's only seventy per cent profit. Just after the war you could have got three hundred per cent. If you'd done only half a dozen little operations like that every year you'd be able to retire by now."

"Why the high price in India?" Bond didn't really want to know. He thought M might ask him.

"It's a long story. Briefly, India is shorter of gold, particularly for her jewellery trade, than any other country."

"What's the size of this traffic?"

"Huge. To give you an idea, the Indian Intelligence Bureau and their Customs *captured* forty-three thousand ounces in 1955. I doubt if that's one per cent of the traffic. Gold's been coming into India from all points of the compass. Latest dodge is to fly it in from Macao and drop it by parachute to a reception committee—a ton at a time—like we used to drop supplies to the Resistance during the war."

"I see. Is there anywhere else I can get a good premium for my gold bar?"

"You could get a small premium in most countries—Switzerland, for instance—but it wouldn't be worth your while. India's still the place."

"All right," said Bond. "I think I've got the picture. Now what's your particular problem?" He sat back and lit a cigarette. He was greatly looking forward to hearing about Mr Auric Goldfinger.

Colonel Smithers's eyes took on their hard, foxy look. He said, "There's a man who came over to England in 1937. He was a refugee from Riga. Name of Auric Goldfinger. He was only twenty when he arrived, but he must have been a bright lad because he smelled that the Russians would be swallowing his country pretty soon. He was a jeweller and goldsmith by trade, like his father and grandfather who had refined gold for Fabergé. He had a little money and probably one of those belts of gold I was telling you about. Stole it from his father, I daresay. Well, soon

after he'd been naturalized—he was a harmless sort of chap and in a useful trade and he had no difficulty in getting his papers—he started buying up small pawn-brokers all over the country. He put in his own men, paid them well and changed the name of the shops to 'Goldfinger'. Then he turned the shops over to selling cheap jewellery and buying old gold—you know the sort of place: 'Best Prices for Old Gold. Nothing too Large, Nothing too Small', and he had his own particular slogan: 'Buy Her Engagement Ring With Grannie's Locket.' Goldfinger did very well. Always chose good sites, just on the dividing line between the well-to-do streets and the lower-middle. Never touched stolen goods and got a good name everywhere with the police. He lived in London and toured his shops once a month and collected all the old gold. He wasn't interested in the jewellery side. He let his managers run that as they liked." Colonel Smithers looked quizzically at Bond. "You may think these lockets and gold crosses and things are pretty small beer. So they are, but they mount up if you've got twenty little shops, each one buying perhaps half a dozen bits and pieces every week. Well, the war came and Goldfinger, like all other jewellers, had to declare his stock of gold. I looked up his figure in our old records. It was fifty ounces for the whole chain!—just enough of a working stock to keep his shops supplied with ring setting and so forth, what they call jewellers' findings in the trade. Of course, he was allowed to keep it. He tucked himself away in a machine-tool firm in Wales during the war—well out of the firing line—but kept as many of his shops operating as he could. Must have done well out of the GIs who generally travel with a Gold Eagle or a Mexican fifty-dollar piece as a last reserve. Then, when peace broke out, Goldfinger got moving. He bought himself a house, pretentious sort of place, at Reculver, at the mouth of the Thames. He also invested in a well-found Brixham trawler and an old Silver Ghost Rolls Royce—armoured car, built for some South American president who was killed before he could take delivery. He set up a little factory called 'Thanet Alloy Research' in the grounds of his house and staffed it with a German metallurgist, a prisoner of war who didn't want to go back to Germany, and half a dozen Korean stevedores he picked up in Liverpool. They didn't know a word

of any civilized language so they weren't any security risk. Then, for ten years, all we know is that he made one trip a year to India in his trawler and a few trips in his car every year to Switzerland. Set up a subsidiary of his alloy company near Geneva. He kept his shops going. Gave up collecting the old gold himself—used one of his Koreans whom he had taught to drive a car. All right, perhaps Mr Goldfinger is not a very honest man, but he behaves himself and keeps in well with the police, and with much more blatant fiddling going on all over the country nobody paid him any attention."

Colonel Smithers broke off. He looked apologetically at Bond. "I'm not boring you? I do want you to get the picture of the sort of man this is—quiet, careful, law-abiding and with the sort of drive and single-mindedness we all admire. We didn't even hear of him until he suffered a slight misfortune. In the summer of 1954, his trawler, homeward bound from India, went ashore on the Goodwins and he sold the wreck for a song to the Dover Salvage Company. When this company started breaking the ship up and got as far as the hold they found the timbers impregnated with a sort of brown powder which they couldn't put a name to. They sent a specimen to a local chemist. They were surprised when he said the stuff was gold. I won't bother you with the formula, but you see gold can be made to dissolve in a mixture of hydrochloric and nitric acids, and reducing agents—sulphur dioxide or oxalic acid—precipitate the metal as a brown powder. This powder can be reconstituted into gold ingots by melting at around a thousand degrees Centigrade. Have to watch the chlorine gas, but otherwise it's a simple process.

"The usual nosey parker in the salvage firm gossiped to one of the Dover Customs men and in due course a report filtered up through the police and the CID to me, together with a copy of the cargo clearance papers for each of Goldfinger's trips to India. These gave all the cargoes as mineral dust base for crop fertilizers—all perfectly credible because these modern fertilizers do use traces of various minerals in their make-up. The whole picture was clear as crystal. Goldfinger had been refining down his old gold, precipitating it into this brown powder and shipping it to India as fertilizer. But could we pin it on him? We could not. Had a quiet look at his bank balance and tax returns. Twenty

thousand pounds at Barclays in Ramsgate. Income tax and super tax paid promptly each year. Figures showed the natural progress of a well-run jewellery business. We dressed a couple of the Gold Squad up and sent them down to knock on the door of Mr Goldfinger's factory at Reculver. 'Sorry, sir, routine inspection for the Small Engineering Section of the Ministry of Labour. We have to make sure the Factory Acts are being observed for safety and health.' 'Come in. Come in.' Mr Goldfinger positively welcomed them. Mark you, he may have been tipped off by his bank manager or someone, but that factory was entirely devoted to designing a cheap alloy for jewellers' findings—trying out unusual metals like aluminium and tin instead of the usual copper and nickel and palladium that are used in gold alloys. There were traces of gold about, of course, and furnaces to heat up to two thousand degrees and so forth, but after all Goldfinger was a jeweller and a smelter in a small way, and all this was perfectly above-board. The Gold Squad retired discomfited, our legal department decided the brown dust in the trawler's timbers was not enough to prosecute on without supporting evidence, and that was more or less that, except"—Colonel Smithers slowly wagged the stem of his pipe—"that I kept the file open and started sniffing around the banks of the world."

Colonel Smithers paused. The rumble of the City came through the half-open window high up in the wall behind his chair. Bond glanced surreptitiously at his watch. Five o'clock. Colonel Smithers got up from his chair. He placed both hands palm downwards on the desk and leant forward. "It took me five years, Mr Bond, to find out that Mr Goldfinger, in ready money, is the richest man in England. In Zürich, in Nassau, in Panama, in New York, he has twenty million pounds' worth of gold bars on safe deposit. And those bars, Mr Bond, are not Mint bars. They don't carry any official marks of origin whatsoever. They're bars that Mr Goldfinger has melted himself. I flew to Nassau and had a look at the five million pounds' worth or so he holds there in the vaults of the Royal Bank of Canada. Oddly enough, like all artists, he couldn't refrain from signing his handiwork. It needs a microscope to see it, but somewhere, on each Goldfinger bar, a minute letter Z has been scratched in the metal. And that gold, or most of it, belongs to

England. The Bank can do nothing about it, so we are asking you to bring Mr Goldfinger to book, Mr Bond, and get that gold back. You know about the currency crisis and the high bank rate? Of course. Well, England needs that gold, badly—and the quicker the better."

CHAPTER 7

THOUGHTS IN A DBIII

BOND followed Colonel Smithers to the lift. While they waited for it, Bond glanced out of the tall window at the end of the passage. He was looking down into the deep well of the back courtyard of the Bank. A trim chocolate-brown lorry with no owner's name had come into the courtyard through the triple steel gates. Square cardboard boxes were being unloaded from it and put on to a short conveyor belt that disappeared into the bowels of the Bank.

Colonel Smithers came over. "Fivers," he commented. "Just come up from our printing works at Loughton."

The lift came and they got in. Bond said, "I'm not very impressed by the new ones. They look like any other country's money. The old ones were the most beautiful money in the world."

They walked across the entrance hall, now dimly lit and deserted. Colonel Smithers said, "As a matter of fact I agree with you. Trouble was that those Reichsbank forgeries during the war were a darn sight too good. When the Russians captured Berlin, amongst the loot they got hold of the plates. We asked the Narodni Bank for them, but they refused to give them up. We and the Treasury decided it was just too dangerous. At any moment, if Moscow had been inclined, they could have started a major raid on our currency. We had to withdraw the old fivers. The new ones aren't much to look at, but at least they'd be hell to forge."

The night guard let them out on to the steps. Thread-needle Street was almost deserted. The long City night was beginning. Bond said goodbye to Colonel Smithers and walked along to the Tube. He had never thought very

much about the Bank of England, but now that he had been inside the place he decided that the Old Lady of Threadneedle Street might be old but she still had some teeth left in her head.

Bond had been told to report back to M at six. He did so. M's face was no longer pink and shining. The long day had knocked it about, stressed it, shrunk it. When Bond went in and took the chair across the desk, he noticed the conscious effort M made to clear his mind, cope with the new problem the day was to fling at him. M straightened himself in his chair and reached for his pipe. "Well?"

Bond knew the false belligerence of that particular bark. He told the gist of the story in less than five minutes.

When he had finished, M said thoughtfully, "Suppose we've got to take it on. Don't understand a thing about the pound and bank rate and all that but everyone seems to be taking it damned seriously. Personally I should have thought the strength of the pound depended on how hard we all worked rather than how much gold we'd got. Germans didn't have much gold after the war. Look where they've got in ten years. However, that's probably too easy an answer for the politicians—or more likely too difficult. Got any ideas how to tackle this chap Goldfinger? Any way of getting closer to him, offering to do some dirty work for him or something like that?"

Bond said thoughtfully, "I wouldn't get anywhere sucking up to him, asking him for a job or something of that sort, sir. I should say he's the sort of man who only respects people who are tougher or smarter than he is. I've given him one beating and the only message I got from him was that he'd like me to play golf with him. Perhaps I'd better do just that."

"Fine way for one of my top men to spend his time." The sarcasm in M's voice was weary, resigned. "All right. Go ahead. But if what you say is right, you'd better see that you beat him. What's your cover story?"

Bond shrugged. "I hadn't thought, sir. Perhaps I'd better be thinking of leaving Universal Export. No future in it. Having a holiday while I look round. Thinking of emigrating to Canada. Fed up here. Something like that. But perhaps I'd better play it the way the cards fall. I wouldn't think he's an easy man to fool."

"All right. Report progress. And don't think I'm not interested in this case." M's voice had changed. So had his expression. His eyes had become urgent, commanding. "Now I'll give you one piece of information the Bank didn't give you. It just happens that I also know what Mr Goldfinger's gold bars look like. As a matter of fact I was handling one today—scratched Z and all. It had come in with that haul we made last week when the Redland Resident Director's office 'caught fire' in Tangier. You'll have seen the signals. Well, that's the twentieth of these particular gold bars that have come our way since the war."

Bond interrupted, "But that Tangier bar was out of the SMERSH safe."

"Exactly. I've checked. All the other nineteen bars with the scratched Z have been taken from SMERSH operatives." M paused. He said mildly, "D'you know, 007, I wouldn't be at all surprised if Goldfinger doesn't turn out to be the foreign banker, the treasurer so to speak, of SMERSH."

James Bond flung the DB III through the last mile of straight and did a racing change down into third and then into second for the short hill before the inevitable traffic crawl through Rochester. Leashed in by the velvet claw of the front discs, the engine muttered its protest with a mild back-popple from the twin exhausts. Bond went up into third again, beat the lights at the bottom of the hill and slid resignedly up to the back of the queue that would crawl on for a quarter of an hour—if he was lucky—through the sprawl of Rochester and Chatham.

Bond settled back into second and let the car idle. He reached for the wide gunmetal case of Morland cigarettes on the neighbouring bucket seat, fumbled for one and lit it from the dashboard.

He had chosen the A2 in preference to the A20 to Sandwich because he wanted to take a quick look at Goldfinger-land—Reculver and those melancholy forsaken reaches of the Thames which Goldfinger had chosen for his parish. He would then cross the Isle of Thanet to Ramsgate and leave his bag at the Channel Packet, have an early lunch and be off to Sandwich.

The car was from the pool. Bond had been offered the Aston Martin or a Jaguar 3.4. He had taken the DB III.

Either of the cars would have suited his cover—a well-to-do, rather adventurous young man with a taste for the good, the fast things of life. But the DB III had the advantage of an up-to-date triptyque, an inconspicuous colour—battleship grey—and certain extras which might or might not come in handy. These included switches to alter the type and colour of Bond's front and rear lights if he was following or being followed at night, reinforced steel bumpers, fore and aft, in case he needed to ram, a long-barrelled Colt .45 in a trick compartment under the driver's seat, a radio pick-up tuned to receive an apparatus called the Homer, and plenty of concealed space that would fox most Customs men.

Bond saw a chance and picked up fifty yards, sliding into a ten-yard gap left by a family saloon of slow reactions. The man at the wheel, who wore that infallible badge of the bad driver, a hat clamped firmly on the exact centre of his head, hooted angrily. Bond reached out of the window and raised an enigmatically clenched fist. The hooting stopped.

And now what about this theory of M's? It made sense. The Russians were notoriously incompetent payers of their men. Their centres were always running out of funds—their men complaining to Moscow that they couldn't afford a square meal. Perhaps SMERSH couldn't get the valuta out of the Ministry of Home Security. Or perhaps the Ministry of Home Security couldn't get the money out of the Ministry of Finance. But it had always been the same—endless money troubles that resulted in missed chances, broken promises and waste of dangerous radio time. It would make sense to have a clever financial brain somewhere outside Russia who could not only transmit funds to the centres but also, in this case, make profits large enough to run the SMERSH centres abroad without any financial assistance from Moscow. Not only that. On the side, Goldfinger was appreciably damaging the currency base of an enemy country. If all this was correct, it was typical of SMERSH—a brilliant scheme, faultlessly operated by an outstanding man. And that, reflected Bond as he roared up the hill into Chatham, putting half a dozen cars behind him, would partly explain Goldfinger's greed for more and still more money. Devotion to the cause, to SMERSH, and perhaps the dangled prize of an Order of Lenin, would be the

spur to pick up even ten or twenty thousand dollars when the odds were right or could be favourably adjusted. The funds for Red Revolution, for the discipline by fear that was the particular speciality of SMERSH, could never be big enough. Goldfinger was not making the money for himself. He was making it for the conquest of the world! The minor risk of being found out, as he had been by Bond, was nothing. Why? What could the Bank of England get him if every single one of his past operations could be exposed? Two years? Three?

The traffic was thinning through the outskirts of Gillingham. Bond started motoring again, but easily now, not hurrying, following his thoughts as the hands and feet went through their automatic responses.

So, in 'thirty-seven, SMERSH must have sent Goldfinger out with the belt of gold round his young waist. He had shown his special aptitudes, his acquisitive bent, during his training in the spy school in Leningrad. He would have been told there would be a war, that he must dig himself in and start quietly accumulating. Goldfinger must never dirty his hands, never meet an agent, never receive or pass a message. Some routine would have been arranged. 'Second-hand '39 Vauxhall. First offer of £1000 secures', 'Immaculate Rover, £2000', 'Bentley, £5000'. Always an advertisement that would not attract attention or correspondence. The prices would be just too high, the description inadequate. In the Agony column of *The Times*, perhaps. And, obediently, Goldfinger would leave the two thousand pounds or the five thousand pounds gold bar at one of a long, a very long series of post-boxes that had been arranged in Moscow before he left. A particular bridge, a hollow tree, under a rock in a stream somewhere, anywhere in England. And he would never, on any account, visit that postbox again. It was up to Moscow to see that the agent got to the hidden treasure. Later, after the war, when Goldfinger was blossoming out, when he had become a big man, the postboxes would no longer be bridges and trees. Now he would be given dates and safety deposit box numbers, left-luggage lockers at stations. But still there would be the rule that Goldfinger must never revisit the scene, never endanger himself. Perhaps he would only get his instructions once a year, at a casual meeting in some park, in a letter slipped into his pocket on a train journey. But always it would be bars of

gold, anonymous, untraceable if captured—except for the tiny Z that his vanity had scratched on his handiwork and that a dull dog at the Bank of England called Colonel Smithers had happened upon in the course of his duties.

Now Bond was running through the endless orchards of the Faversham growers. The sun had come out from behind the smog of London. There was the distant gleam of the Thames on his left. There was traffic on the river—long, glistening tankers, stubby merchantmen, antediluvian Dutch Schuyts. Bond left the Canterbury road and switched on to the incongruously rich highway that runs through the cheap bungalow world of the holiday lands—Whitstable, Herne Bay, Birchington, Margate. He still idled along at fifty, holding the racing wheel on a light rein, listening to the relaxed purr of the exhausts, fitting the bits of his thoughts into the jigsaw as he had done two nights before with Goldfinger's face on the Identicast.

And, Bond reflected, while Goldfinger was pumping a million, two million pounds a year into the bloody maw of SMERSH, he was pyramiding his reserves, working on them, making them work for him whenever the odds were right; piling up the surplus for the day when the trumpets would sound in the Kremlin and every golden sinew would be mobilized. And no one outside Moscow had been watching the process, no one suspected that Goldfinger—the jeweller, the metallurgist, the resident of Reculver and Nassau, the respected member of Blades, of the Royal St Marks at Sandwich—was one of the greatest conspirators of all time, that he had financed the murder of hundreds, perhaps thousands of victims of SMERSH all over the world. SMERSH, *Smiert Spionam*, Death to Spies—the murder Apparatus of the High Praesidium! And only M suspected it, only Bond knew it. And here was Bond, launched against this man by a series of flukes, a train of coincidence that had been started by a plane breaking down on the other side of the world. Bond smiled grimly to himself. How often in his profession had it been the same—the tiny acorn of coincidence that soared into the mighty oak whose branches darkened the sky. And now, once again, he was setting out to bring the dreadful growth down. With what? A bag of golf clubs?

A repainted sky-blue Ford Popular with large yellow ears was scurrying along the crown of the road ahead.

minimum of pain. It was much more horrible afterwards than when it was happening. It is a triumph of self-control to see a man whipped until the muscles of his back show white and glistening through the cuts and to give no sign of pity or anger or interest. And Adam learned this.

People are felt rather than seen after the first few moments. During his second sentence on the roads of Florida, Adam reduced his personality to a minus. He caused no stir, put out no vibration, became as nearly invisible as it is possible to be. And when the guards could not feel him, they were not afraid of him. They gave him the jobs of cleaning the camps, of handing out the slops to the prisoners, of filling the water buckets.

Adam waited until three days before his second release. Right after noon that day he filled the water buckets and went back to the little river for more. He filled his buckets with stones and sank them, and then he eased himself into the water and swam a long way down-stream, rested and swam farther down. He kept moving in the water until at dusk he found a place under a bank with bushes for cover. He did not get out of the water.

Late in the night he heard the hounds go by, covering both sides of the river. He had rubbed his hair hard with green leaves to cover human odour. He sat in the water with his nose and eyes clear. In the morning the hounds came back, disinterested and the men were too tired to beat the banks properly. When they were gone, Adam dug a piece of water-logged fried saw-belly out of his pocket and ate it.

He had schooled himself against hurry. Most men were caught bolting. It took Adam five days to cross the short distance into Georgia. He took no chances, held back his impatience with an iron control. He was astonished at his ability.

On the edge of Valdosta, Georgia, he lay hidden until long after midnight, and he entered the town like a shadow, crept to the rear of a cheap store, forced a window slowly so that the screws of the lock were pulled from the sun-rotted wood. Then he replaced the lock but left the window open. He had to work by moonlight drifting through dirty windows. He stole a pair of cheap trousers, a white shirt, black shoes, black hat, and an oil-skin raincoat, and he tried on each article for fit. He forced himself to make sure nothing looked disturbed before he climbed out of the window. He had taken nothing which was not heavily stocked. He had not even looked for the cash drawer. He lowered the window carefully and slipped from shadow to shadow in the moonlight.

Bond carried his clubs to the professional's shop and through to the workroom. Alfred Blacking was winding a new grip on to a driver.

"Hullo, Alfred."

The professional looked up sharply. His sunburned, leathery face broke into a wide smile. "Why, if it isn't Mr James!" They shook hands. "Must be fifteen, twenty years. What brings you down here, sir? Someone was telling me only the other day that you're in the diplomatic or something. Always abroad. Well, I never! Still the same flat swing, sir?" Alfred Blacking joined his hands and gave a low, flat sweep.

"Afraid so, Alfred. Never had time to get myself out of it. How's Mrs Blacking and Cecil?"

"Can't complain, sir. Cecil was runner-up in the Kent Championship last year. Should win it this year if he can only get out of the shop and on to the course a bit more."

Bond propped his clubs up against the wall. It was good to be back. Everything was just the same. There had been a time in his teens when he had played two rounds a day every day of the week at St Marks. Blacking had always wanted to take him in hand. "A bit of practice, Mr James, and you'd be scratch. No fooling. You really would. What do you want to hang around at six for? It's all there except for that flat swing and wanting to hit the ball out of sight when there's no point in it. And you've got the temperament. A couple of years, perhaps only one, and I'd have you in the Amateur." But something had told Bond that there wasn't going to be a great deal of golf in his life and if he liked the game he'd better forget about lessons and just play as much of it as he could. Yes, it would be about twenty years since he had played his last round on St Marks. He'd never been back—even when there had been that bloody affair of the Moonraker at Kingsdown, ten miles down the coast. Perhaps it had been sentimentality. Since St Marks, Bond had got in a good deal of weekend golf when he was at headquarters. But always on the courses round London—Huntercombe, Swinley, Sunningdale, the Berkshire. Bond's handicap had gone up to nine. But he was a real nine—had to be with the games he chose to play, the ten-pound Nassaus with the tough cheery men who were always so anxious to stand you a couple of double kummels after lunch.

"Any chance of a game, Alfred?"

The professional glanced through his back window at the parking space round the tall flag-pole. He shook his head. "Doesn't look too good, sir. Don't get many players in the middle of the week at this time of year."

"What about you?"

"Sorry, sir. I'm booked. Playing with a member. It's a regular thing. Every day at two o'clock. And the trouble is that Cecil's gone over to Princes to get in some practice for the championship. What a dashed nuisance!" (Alfred never used a stronger oath.) "It *would* happen like that. How long are you staying, sir?"

"Not long. Never mind. I'll knock a ball round with a caddie. Who's this chap you're playing with?"

"A Mr Goldfinger, sir." Alfred looked discouraging.

"Oh, Goldfinger. I know the chap. Met him the other day in America."

"You did, sir?" Alfred obviously found it difficult to believe that anyone knew Mr Goldfinger. He watched Bond's face carefully for any further reaction.

"Any good?"

"So-so, sir. Pretty useful off nine."

"Must take his game damned seriously if he plays with you every day."

"Well, yes, sir." The professional's face had the expression Bond remembered so well. It meant that Blacking had an unfavourable view of a particular member but that he was too good a servant of the club to pass it on.

Bond smiled. He said, "You haven't changed, Alfred. What you mean is that no one else will play with him. Remember Farquharson? Slowest player in England. I remember you going round and round with him twenty years ago. Come on. What's the matter with Goldfinger?"

The professional laughed. He said, "It's you that hasn't changed, Mr James. You always were dashed inquisitive." He came a step closer and lowered his voice. "The truth is, sir, some members think Mr Goldfinger is just a little bit hot. You know, sir. Improves his lie and so forth." The professional took the driver he was holding, took up a stance, gazed towards an imaginary hole and banged the head of the club up and down on the floor as if addressing an imaginary ball. "Let me see now, is this a brassie lie? What d'you think, caddie?" Alfred Blacking chuckled.

"Well, of course, by the time he's finished hammering the ground behind the ball, the ball's been raised an inch and it is a brassie lie." Alfred Blacking's face closed up again. He said non-committally, "But that's only gossip, sir. I've never seen anything. Quiet-spoken gentleman. He's got a place at Reculver. Used to come here a lot. But for the last few years he's only been coming to England for a few weeks at a time. Rings up and asks if anyone's wanting a game and when there isn't anyone he books Cecil or me. Rang up this morning and asked if there was anyone about. There's sometimes a stranger drops in." Alfred Blacking looked quizzically at Bond. "I suppose you wouldn't care to take him on this afternoon? It'll look odd you being here and short of a game. And you knowing him and all. He might think I'd been trying to keep him to myself or something. That wouldn't do."

"Nonsense, Alfred. And you've got your living to make. Why don't we play a three-ball?"

"He won't play them, sir. Says they're too slow. And I agree with him. And don't you worry about my fee. There's a lot of work to do in the shop and I'll be glad of an afternoon to get down to it." Alfred Blacking glanced at his watch. "He'll be along any minute now. I've got a caddie for you. Remember Hawker?" Alfred Blacking laughed indulgently. "Still the same old Hawker. He'll be another that'll be glad to see you down here again."

Bond said, "Well thanks, Alfred. I'd be interested to see how this chap plays. But why not leave it like this? Say I've dropped in to get a club made up. Old member. Used to play here before the war. And I need a new number four wood anyway. Your old one has started to give at the seams a bit. Just be casual. Don't say you've told me he's about. I'll stay in the shop so it'll give him a chance to take his choice without offending me. Perhaps he won't like my face or something. Right?"

"Very good, Mr James. Leave it to me. That's his car coming now, sir." Blacking pointed through the window. Half a mile away, a bright yellow car was turning off the road and coming up the private drive. "Funny looking contraption. Sort of motor car we used to see here when I was a boy."

Bond watched the old Silver Ghost sweep majestically

up the drive towards the club. She was a beauty! The sun glittered off the silver radiator and off the engine-turned aluminium shield below the high perpendicular glass cliff of the windscreen. The luggage rail on the roof of the heavy coach-built limousine body—so ugly twenty years ago, so strangely beautiful today—was polished brass, as were the two Lucas "King of the Road" headlamps that stared so haughtily down the road ahead, and the wide mouth of the old boa-constrictor bulb horn. The whole car, except for a black roof and black carrosserie lines and curved panels below the windows, was primrose yellow. It crossed Bond's mind that the South American president might have had it copied from the famous yellow fleet in which Lord Lonsdale had driven to the Derby and Ascot.

And now? In the driver's seat sat a figure in a café-au-lait dust coat and cap, his big round face obscured by black-rimmed driving goggles. Beside him was a squat figure in black with a bowler hat placed firmly on the middle of his head. The two figures stared straight in front of them with a curious immobility. It was almost as if they were driving a hearse.

The car was coming closer. The six pairs of eyes—the eyes of the two men and the great twin orbs of the car—seemed to be looking straight through the little window and into Bond's eyes.

Instinctively, Bond took a few paces back into the dark recesses of the workroom. He noticed the movement and smiled to himself. He picked up somebody's putter and bent down and thoughtfully addressed a knot in the wooden floor.

PART TWO : COINCIDENCE

CHAPTER 8

ALL TO PLAY FOR

"GOOD AFTERNOON, Blacking. All set?" The voice was casual, authoritative. "I see there's a car outside. Not somebody looking for a game, I suppose?"

"I'm not sure, sir. It's an old member come back to have a club made up. Would you like me to ask him, sir?"

"Who is it? What's his name?"

Bond smiled grimly. He pricked his ears. He wanted to catch every inflection.

"A Mr Bond, sir."

There was a pause. "Bond?" The voice had not changed. It was politely interested. "Met a fellow called Bond the other day. What's his first name?"

"James, sir."

"Oh yes." Now the pause was longer. "Does he know I'm here?" Bond could sense Goldfinger's antennae probing the situation.

"He's in the workshop, sir. May have seen your car drive up." Bond thought: Alfred's never told a lie in his life. He's not going to start now.

"Might be an idea." Now Goldfinger's voice unbent. He wanted something from Alfred Blacking, some information. "What sort of a game does this chap play? What's his handicap?"

"Used to be quite useful when he was a boy, sir. Haven't seen his game since then."

"Hm."

Bond could feel the man weighing it all up. Bond smelled that the bait was going to be taken. He reached into his bag and pulled out his driver and started rubbing down the grip with a block of shellac. Might as well look busy. A board in the shop creaked. Bond honed away industriously, his back to the open door.

"I think we've met before." The voice from the doorway was low, neutral.

Bond looked quickly over his shoulder. "My God, you made me jump. Why—" recognition dawned—"it's Gold, Goldman . . . er—Goldfinger." He hoped he wasn't over-laying it. He said with a hint of dislike, or mistrust, "Where have you sprung from?"

"I told you I played down here. Remember?" Goldfinger was looking at him shrewdly. Now the eyes opened wide. The X-ray gaze pierced through to the back of Bond's skull.

"No."

"Did not Miss Masterton give you my message?"

"No. What was it?"

"I said I would be over here and that I would like a game of golf with you."

"Oh, well," Bond's voice was coldly polite, "we must do that some day."

"I was playing with the professional. I will play with you instead." Goldfinger was stating a fact.

There was no doubt that Goldfinger was hooked. Now Bond must play hard to get.

"Why not some other time? I've come to order a club. Anyway I'm not in practice. There probably isn't a caddie."

Bond was being as rude as he could. Obviously the last thing he wanted to do was play with Goldfinger.

"I also haven't played for some time." (Bloody liar, thought Bond.) "Ordering a club will not take a moment." Goldfinger turned back into the shop. "Blacking, have you got a caddie for Mr Bond?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then that is arranged."

Bond wearily thrust his driver back into his bag. "Well, all right then." He thought of a final way of putting Goldfinger off. He said roughly, "But I warn you I like playing for money. I can't be bothered to knock a ball round just for the fun of it." Bond felt pleased with the character he was building up for himself.

Was there a glint of triumph, quickly concealed, in Goldfinger's pale eyes? He said indifferently, "That suits me. Anything you like. Off handicap, of course. I think you said you're nine."

"Yes."

Goldfinger said carefully, "Where, may I ask?"

"Huntercombe." Bond was also nine at Sunningdale. Huntercombe was an easier course. Nine at Huntercombe wouldn't frighten Goldfinger.

"And I also am nine. Here. Up on the board. So it's a level game. Right?"

Bond shrugged. "You'll be too good for me."

"I doubt it. However," Goldfinger was offhand, "tell you what I'll do. That bit of money you removed from me in Miami. Remember? The big figure was ten. I like a gamble. It will be good for me to have to try. I will play you double or quits for that."

Bond said indifferently, "That's too much." Then, as if he thought better of it, thought he might win, he said—with just the right amount of craft mixed with reluctance—"Of course you can say that was 'found money'. I won't miss it if it goes again. Oh, well, all right. Easy come easy go. Level match. Ten thousand dollars it is."

Goldfinger turned away. He said, and there was a sudden sweetness in the flat voice, "That's all arranged then, Mr Blacking. Many thanks. Put your fee down on my account. Very sorry we shall be missing our game. Now, let me pay the caddie fees."

Alfred Blacking came into the workroom and picked up Bond's clubs. He looked very directly at Bond. He said, "Remember what I told you, sir." One eye closed and opened again. "I mean about that flat swing of yours. It needs watching—all the time."

Bond smiled at him. Alfred had long ears. He might not have caught the figure, but he knew that somehow this was to be a key game. "Thanks, Alfred. I won't forget. Four Penfolds—with hearts on them. And a dozen tees. I won't be a minute."

Bond walked through the shop and out to his car. The bowler-hatted man was polishing the metal work of the Rolls with a cloth. Bond felt rather than saw him stop and watch Bond take out his zip bag and go into the club house. The man had a square flat yellow face. One of the Koreans?

Bond paid his green-fee to Hampton, the steward, and went into the changing-room. It was just the same—the same tacky smell of old shoes and socks and last summer's

sweat. Why was it a tradition of the most famous golf clubs that their standard of hygiene should be that of a Victorian private school? Bond changed his socks and put on the battered old pair of nailed Saxones. He took off the coat of his yellowing black and white hound's tooth suit and pulled on a faded black wind-cheater. Cigarettes? Lighter? He was ready to go.

Bond walked slowly out, preparing his mind for the game. On purpose he had needled this man into a high, tough match so that Goldfinger's respect for him should be increased and Goldfinger's view of Bond—that he was the type of ruthless, hard adventurer who might be very useful to Goldfinger—would be confirmed. Bond had thought that perhaps a hundred-pound Nassau would be the form. But ten thousand dollars! There had probably never been such a high singles game in history—except in the finals of American Championships or in the big amateur Calcutta Sweeps where it was the backers rather than the players who had the money on. Goldfinger's private accounting must have taken a nasty dent. He wouldn't have liked that. He would be aching to get some of his money back. When Bond had talked about playing high, Goldfinger had seen his chance. So be it. But one thing was certain, for a hundred reasons Bond could not afford to lose.

He turned into the shop and picked up the balls and tees from Alfred Blacking.

"Hawker's got the clubs, sir."

Bond strolled out across the five hundred yards of shaven seaside turf that led to the first tee. Goldfinger was practising on the putting green. His caddie stood near by, rolling balls to him. Goldfinger putted in the new fashion—between his legs with a mallet putter. Bond felt encouraged. He didn't believe in the system. He knew it was no good practising himself. His old hickory Calamity Jane had its good days and its bad. There was nothing to do about it. He knew also that the St Mark's practice green bore no resemblance, in speed or texture, to the greens on the course.

Bond caught up with the limping, insouciant figure of his caddie who was sauntering along chipping at an imaginary ball with Bond's blaster. "Afternoon, Hawker."

"Afternoon, sir." Hawker handed Bond the blaster and threw down three used balls. His keen sardonic poacher's

face split in a wry grin of welcome. "How've you been keepin', sir? Played any golf in the last twenty years? Can you still put them on the roof of the starter's hut?" This referred to the day when Bond, trying to do just that before a match, had put two balls through the starter's window.

"Let's see." Bond took the blaster and hefted it in his hand, gauging the distance. The tap of the balls on the practice green had ceased. Bond addressed the ball, swung quickly, lifted his head and shanked the ball almost at right angles. He tried again. This time it was a dunch. A foot of turf flew up. The ball went ten yards. Bond turned to Hawker, who was looking his most sardonic. "It's all right, Hawker. Those were for show. Now then, one for you." He stepped up to the third ball, took his club back slowly and whipped the club head through. The ball soared a hundred feet, paused elegantly, dropped eighty feet on to the thatched roof of the starter's hut and bounced down.

Bond handed back the club. Hawker's eyes were thoughtful, amused. He said nothing. He pulled out the driver and handed it to Bond. They walked together to the first tee, talking about Hawker's family.

Goldfinger joined them, relaxed, impassive. Bond greeted Goldfinger's caddie, an obsequious, talkative man called Foulks whom Bond had never liked. Bond glanced at Goldfinger's clubs. They were a brand new set of American Ben Hogans with smart St Marks leather covers for the woods. The bag was one of the stitched black leather holdalls favoured by American pros. The clubs were in individual cardboard tubes for easy extraction. It was a pretentious outfit, but the best.

"Toss for honour?" Goldfinger flicked a coin.

"Tails."

It was heads. Goldfinger took out his driver and unpeeled a new ball. He said, "Dunlop 65. Number One. Always use the same ball. What's yours?"

"Penfold. Hearts."

Goldfinger looked keenly at Bond. "Strict Rules of Golf?"

"Naturally."

"Right." Goldfinger walked on to the tee and teed up. He took one or two careful, concentrated practice swings. It was a type of swing Bond knew well—the grooved, mechanical, repeating swing of someone who had studied

the game with great care, read all the books and spent five thousand pounds on the finest pro teachers. It would be a good, scoring swing which might not collapse under pressure. Bond envied it.

Goldfinger took up his stance, waggled gracefully, took his club head back in a wide slow arc and, with his eyes glued to the ball, broke his wrists correctly. He brought the club head mechanically, effortlessly, down and through the ball and into a rather artificial, copybook finish. The ball went straight and true about two hundred yards down the fairway.

It was an excellent, uninspiring shot. Bond knew that Goldfinger would be capable of repeating the same swing with different clubs again and again round the eighteen holes.

Bond took his place, gave himself a lowish tee, addressed the ball with careful enmity and, with a flat, racket-player's swing in which there was just too much wrist for safety, lashed the ball away. It was a fine, attacking drive that landed past Goldfinger's ball and rolled on fifty yards. But it had had a shade of draw and ended on the edge of the left-hand rough.

They were two good drives. As Bond handed his club to Hawker and strolled off in the wake of the more impatient Goldfinger, he smelled the sweet smell of the beginning of a knock-down-and-drag-out game of golf on a beautiful day in May with the larks singing over the greatest seaside course in the world.

The first hole of the Royal St Marks is four hundred and fifty yards long—four hundred and fifty yards of undulating fairway with one central bunker to trap a mis-hit second shot and a chain of bunkers guarding three-quarters of the green to trap a well-hit one. You can slip through the unguarded quarter, but the fairway slopes to the right there and you are more likely to end up with a nasty first-chip-of-the-day out of the rough. Goldfinger was well placed to try for this opening. Bond watched him take what was probably a spoon, make his two practice swings and address the ball.

Many unlikely people play golf, including people who are blind, who have only one arm, or even no legs, and people often wear bizarre clothes to the game. Other golfers don't think them odd, for there are no rules of appearance

or dress at golf. That is one of its minor pleasures. But Goldfinger had made an attempt to look smart at golf and that is the only way of dressing that is incongruous on a links. Everything matched in a blaze of rust-coloured tweed from the buttoned 'golfer's cap' centred on the huge, flaming red hair, to the brilliantly polished, almost orange shoes. The plus-four suit was too well cut and the plus-fours themselves had been pressed down the sides. The stockings were of a matching heather mixture and had green garter tabs. It was as if Goldfinger had gone to his tailor and said, "Dress me for golf—you know, like they wear in Scotland." Social errors made no impression on Bond, and for the matter of that he rarely noticed them. With Goldfinger it was different. Everything about the man had grated on Bond's teeth from the first moment he had seen him. The assertive blatancy of his clothes was just part of the malevolent animal magnetism that had affected Bond from the beginning.

Goldfinger executed his mechanical, faultless swing. The ball flew true but just failed to make the slope and curled off to the right to finish pinhigh off the green in the short rough. Easy five. A good chip could turn it into a four, but it would have to be a good one.

Bond walked over to his ball. It was lying cocked up, just off the fairway. Bond took his number four wood. Now for the 'all air route'—a soaring shot that would carry the cross-bunkers and give him two putts for a four. Bond remembered the dictum of the pros: "It's never too early to start winning." He took it easy, determined not to press for the long but comfortable carry.

As soon as Bond had hit the shot he knew it wouldn't do. The difference between a good golf shot and a bad one is the same as the difference between a beautiful and a plain woman—a matter of millimetres. In this case, the club face had gone through just that one millimetre too low under the ball. The arc of flight was high and soft—no legs. Why the hell hadn't he taken a spoon or a two iron off that lie? The ball hit the lip of the far bunker and fell back. Now it was the blaster, and fighting for a half.

Bond never worried too long about his bad or stupid shots. He put them behind him and thought of the next. He came up with the bunker, took his blaster and measured the distance to the pin. Twenty yards. The ball was

lying well back. Should he splash it out with a wide stance and an outside-in swing, or should he blast it and take plenty of sand? For safety's sake he would blast it out. Bond went down into the bunker. Head down and follow well through. The easiest shot in golf. Try and put it dead. The wish, half way down his back swing, hurried the hands in front of the club head. The loft was killed and there was the ball rolling back off the face. Get it out, you bloody fool, and hole a long putt! Now Bond took too much sand. He was out, but barely on the green. Goldfinger bent to his chip and kept his head down until the ball was half way to the hole. The ball stopped three inches from the pin. Without waiting to be given the putt, Goldfinger turned his back on Bond and walked off towards the second tee. Bond picked up his ball and took his driver from Hawker.

"What does he say his handicap is, sir?"

"Nine. It's a level match. Have to do better than that though. Ought to have taken my spoon for the second."

Hawker said encouragingly, "It's early days yet, sir."

Bond knew it wasn't. It was always too early to start losing.

CHAPTER 9

THE CUP AND THE LIP

GOLDFINGER had already teed up. Bond walked slowly behind him, followed by Hawker. Bond stood and leant on his driver. He said, "I thought you said we would be playing the strict rules of golf. But I'll give you that putt. That makes you one up."

Goldfinger nodded curtly. He went through his practice-routine and hit his usual excellent, safe drive.

The second hole is a three hundred and seventy yard dogleg to the left with deep cross-bunkers daring you to take the tiger's line. But there was a light helping breeze. For Goldfinger it would now be a five iron for his second. Bond decided to try and make it easier for himself and only have a wedge for the green. He laid his ears back and hit the ball hard and straight for the bunkers. The breeze got

or dress at golf. Goldfinger had made an attempt to wear that is the only way of dressing that is incongruous on links. Everything matched in a blaze of rust-coloured tweed from the buttoned 'golfer's cap' centred on the huge flaming red hair, to the brilliantly polished, almost orange shoes. The plus-four suit was too well cut and the plus-fours themselves had been pressed down the sides. The stockings were of a matching heather mixture and had green garter tabs. It was as if Goldfinger had gone to his tailor and said, "Dress me for golf—you know, like they wear in Scotland." Social errors made no impression on Bond, and for the matter of that he rarely noticed them. With Goldfinger it was different. Everything about the man had grated on Bond's teeth from the first moment he had seen him. The assertive blatancy of his clothes was just part of the malevolent animal magnetism that had affected Bond from the beginning.

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CHAPTER 9

THE CUP AND THE LIP

GOLDFINGER had already teed up. Bond walked slowly
J behind him, followed by Hawker. Bond stood and leant
n his driver. He said, "I thought you said we would be
aying the strict rules of golf. But I'll give you that putt.
hat makes you one up."

Goldfinger nodded curtly. He went through his practice-
outine and hit his usual excellent, safe drive.

The second hole is a three hundred and seventy yard
ogleg to the left with deep cross-bunkers daring you to
ke the tiger's line. But there was a light helping breeze.
or Goldfinger it would now be a five iron for his second.
ond decided to try and make it easier for himself and only
ave a wedge for the green. He laid his ears back and hit the
ull hard and straight for the bunkers. The breeze got

under the slight draw and winged the ball on and over. The ball pitched and disappeared down into the gully just short of the green. A four. Chance of a three.

Goldfinger strode off without comment. Bond lengthened his stride and caught up. "How's the agoraphobia? Doesn't all this wide open space bother it?"

"No."

Goldfinger deviated to the right. He glanced at the distant, half-hidden flag, planning his second shot. He took his five iron and hit a good, careful shot which took a bad kick short of the green and ran down into the thick grass to the left. Bond knew that territory. Goldfinger would be lucky to get down in two.

Bond walked up to his ball, took the wedge and flicked the ball on to the green with plenty of stop. The ball pulled up and lay a yard past the hole. Goldfinger executed a creditable pitch but missed the twelve-foot putt. Bond had two for the hole from a yard. He didn't wait to be given the hole but walked up and putted. The ball stopped an inch short. Goldfinger walked off the green. Bond knocked the ball in. All square.

The third is a blind two hundred and forty yards, all carry, a difficult three. Bond chose his brassie and hit a good one. It would be on or near the green. Goldfinger's routine drive was well hit but would probably not have enough steam to carry the last of the rough and trickle down into the saucer of the green. Sure enough, Goldfinger's ball was on top of the protecting mound of rough. He had a nasty, cuppy lie, with a tuft just behind the ball. Goldfinger stood and looked at the lie. He seemed to make up his mind. He stepped past his ball to take a club from the caddie. His left foot came down just behind the ball, flattening the tuft. Goldfinger could now take his putter. He did so and trickled the ball down the bank towards the hole. It stopped three feet short.

Bond frowned. The only remedy against a cheat at golf is not to play with him again. But that was no good in this match. Bond had no intention of playing with the man again. And it was no good starting a you-did-I-didn't argument unless he caught Goldfinger doing something even more outrageous. Bond would just have to try and beat him, cheating and all.

"Don't do it again," said Bond curtly. He stood down on the tee and handed his driver to Hawker. Hawker shook his head sympathetically. Bond took out a cigarette and lit it. Goldfinger hit his drive the dead straight regulation two hundred yards.

They walked down the hill in a silence which Goldfinger unexpectedly broke. "What is the firm you work for?"

"Universal Export."

"And where do they hang out?"

"London. Regent's Park."

"What do they export?"

Bond woke up from his angry ruminations. Here, pay attention! This is work, not a game. All right, he put you off your drive, but you've got your cover to think about. Don't let him needle you into making mistakes about it. Build up your story. Bond said casually, "Oh everything from sewing-machines to tanks."

"What's your speciality?"

Bond could feel Goldfinger's eyes on him. He said, "I look after the small arms side. Spend most of my time selling miscellaneous ironmongery to sheiks and rajahs—anyone the Foreign Office decides doesn't want the stuff to shoot at us with."

"Interesting work." Goldfinger's voice was flat, bored.

"Not very. I'm thinking of quitting. Came down here for a week's holiday to think it out. Not much future in England. Rather like the idea of Canada."

"Indeed?"

They were past the rough and Bond was relieved to find that his ball had got a forward kick off the hill on to the fairway. The fairway curved slightly to the left and Bond had even managed to pick up a few feet on Goldfinger. It was Goldfinger to play. Goldfinger took out his spoon. He wasn't going for the green but only to get over the bunker and through the valley.

Bond waited for the usual safe shot. He looked at his own lie. Yes, he could take his brassie. There came the wooden thud of a mis-hit. Goldfinger's ball, hit off his heel, sped along the ground and into the stony waste of Hell Bunker—the widest bunker and the only unkept one, because of the pebbles, on the course.

For once Homer had nodded—or rather, lifted his head.

Perhaps his mind had been half on what Bond had told him. Good show! But Goldfinger might still get down in three more. Bond took out his brassie. He couldn't afford to play safe. He addressed the ball, seeing in his mind's eye its eighty-eight-millimetre trajectory through the valley and then the two or three bounces that would take it on to the green. He laid off a bit to the right to allow for his draw. Now!

There came a soft clinking away to his right. Bond stood away from his ball. Goldfinger had his back to Bond. He was gazing out to sea, rapt in its contemplation, while his right hand played 'unconsciously' with the money in his pocket.

Bond smiled grimly. He said, "Could you stop shifting bullion till after my shot?"

Goldfinger didn't turn round or answer. The noise stopped. Bond turned back to his shot, desperately trying to clear his mind again. Now the brassie was too much of a risk. It needed too good a shot. He handed it to Hawker and took his spoon and banged the ball safely through the valley. It ran on well and stopped on the apron. A five, perhaps a four.

Goldfinger got well out of the bunker and put his chip dead. Bond putted too hard and missed the one back. Still all square.

The sixth, appropriately called 'The Virgin', is a famous short hole in the world of golf. A narrow green, almost ringed with bunkers, it can need anything from an eight to a two iron according to the wind. Today, for Bond, it was a seven. He played a soaring shot, laid off to the right for the wind to bring it in. It ended twenty feet beyond the pin with a difficult putt over and down a shoulder. Should be a three. Goldfinger took his five and played it straight. The breeze took it and it rolled into the deep bunker on the left. Good news! That would be the hell of a difficult three.

They walked in silence to the green. Bond glanced into the bunker. Goldfinger's ball was in a deep heel-mark. Bond walked over to his ball and listened to the larks. This was going to put him one up. He looked for Hawker to take his putter, but Hawker was the other side of the green, watching with intent concentration Goldfinger play his shot. Goldfinger got down into the bunker with his blaster. He

jumped up to get a view of the hole and then settled himself for the shot. As his club went up Bond's heart lifted. He was going to try and flick it out—a hopeless technique from that buried lie. The only hope would have been to explode it. Down came the club, smoothly, without hurry. With hardly a handful of sand the ball curved up out of the deep bunker, bounced once and lay dead!

Bond swallowed. Blast his eyes! How the hell had Goldfinger managed that? Now, out of sour grapes, Bond must try for his two. He went for it, missed the hole by an inch and rolled a good yard past. Hell and damnation! Bond walked slowly up to the putt, knocking Goldfinger's ball away. Come on, you bloody fool! But the spectre of the big swing—from an almost certain one up to a possible one down—made Bond wish the ball into the hole instead of tapping it in. The coaxed ball, lacking decision, slid past the lip. One down!

Now Bond was angry with himself. He, and he alone, had lost that hole. He had taken three putts from twenty feet. He really must pull himself together and get going.

At the seventh, five hundred yards, they both hit good drives and Goldfinger's immaculate second lay fifty yards short of the green. Bond took his brassie. Now for the equalizer! But he hit from the top, his club head came down too far ahead of the hands and the smothered ball shot into one of the right-hand bunkers. Not a good lie, but he must put it on the green. Bond took a dangerous seven and failed to get it out. Goldfinger got his five. Two down. They halved the short eighth in three. At the ninth Bond, determined to turn only one down, again tried to do too much off a poor lie. Goldfinger got his four to Bond's five. Three down at the turn! Not too good. Bond asked Hawker for a new ball. Hawker unwrapped it slowly, waiting for Goldfinger to walk over the hillock to the next tee. Hawker said softly, "You saw what he did at The Virgin, sir?"

"Yes, damn him. It was an amazing shot."

Hawker was surprised. "Oh, you didn't see what he did in the bunker, sir?"

"No, what? I was too far away."

The other two were out of sight over the rise. Hawker silently walked down into one of the bunkers guarding the

ninth green, kicked a hole with his toe and dropped the ball in the hole. He then stood just behind the half-buried ball with his feet close together. He looked up at Bond. "Remember he jumped up to look at the line to the hole, sir?"

"Yes."

"Just watch this, sir." Hawker looked towards the ninth pin and jumped, just as Goldfinger had done, as if to get the line. Then he looked up at Bond again and pointed to the ball at his feet. The heavy impact of the two feet just behind the ball had levelled the hole in which it had lain and had squeezed the ball out so that it was now perfectly teed for an easy shot—for just the easy cut-up shot which had seemed utterly impossible from Goldfinger's lie at The Virgin.

Bond looked at his caddie for a moment in silence. Then he said, "Thanks, Hawker. Give me the bat and the ball. Somebody's going to be second in this match, and I'm damned if it's going to be me."

"Yes, sir," said Hawker stolidly. He limped off on the short cut that would take him half way down the tenth fairway.

Bond sauntered slowly over the rise and down to the tenth tee. He hardly looked at Goldfinger who was standing on the tee swishing his driver impatiently. Bond was clearing his mind of everything but cold, offensive resolve. For the first time since the first tee, he felt supremely confident. All he needed was a sign from heaven and his game would catch fire.

The tenth at the Royal St Marks is the most dangerous hole on the course. The second shot, to the skiddy plateau green with cavernous bunkers to right and left and a steep hill beyond, has broken many hearts. Bond remembered that Philip Scrutton, out in four under fours in the Gold Bowl, had taken a fourteen at this hole, seven of them ping-pong shots from one bunker to another, to and fro across the green. Bond knew that Goldfinger would play his second to the apron, or short of it, and be glad to get a five. Bond must go for it and get his four.

Two good drives and, sure enough, Goldfinger well up on the apron with his second. A possible four. Bond took his seven, laid off plenty for the breeze and fired the ball off into the sky. At first he thought he had laid off too much,

ut then the ball began to float to the left. It pitched
topped dead in the soft sand blown on to the green from the
ight-hand bunker. A nasty fifteen-foot putt. Bond would
now be glad to get a half. Sure enough, Goldfinger putted
up to within a yard. That, thought Bond as he squared up
to his putt, he will have to hole. He hit his own putt fairly
smartly to get it through the powdering of sand and was
horrified to see it going like lightning across the skiddy green.
God, he was going to have not a yard, but a two-yard putt
back! But suddenly, as if drawn by a magnet, the ball swerved
straight for the hole, hit the back of the tin, bounced up and
fell into the cup with an audible rattle. The sign from heaven!
Bond went up to Hawker, winked at him and took his driver.
They left the caddies and walked down the slope and back
to the next tee. Goldfinger said coldly, "That putt ought to
have run off the green."

Bond said off-handedly, "Always give the hole a chance!"
He teed up his ball and hit his best drive of the day down
the breeze. Wedge and one putt? Goldfinger hit his regula-
tion shot and they walked off again. Bond said, "By the way,
what happened to that nice Miss Masterton?"

Goldfinger looked straight in front of him. "She left my
employ."

Bond thought, good for her! He said, "Oh, I must get in
touch with her again. Where did she go to?"

"I couldn't say." Goldfinger walked away from Bond
towards his ball. Bond's drive was out of sight, over the
ridge that bisected the fairway. It wouldn't be more than
fifty yards from the pin. Bond thought he knew what would
be in Goldfinger's mind, what is in most golfers' minds
when they smell the first scent of a good lead melting away.
Bond wouldn't be surprised to see that grooved swir-
quicken a trifle. It did. Goldfinger hooked into a bunker
on the left of the green.

Now was the moment when it would be the end of
game if Bond made a mistake, let his man off the hook.
had a slightly downhill lie, otherwise an easy chip—but
the trickiest green on the course. Bond played it like a r
The ball ended six feet from the pin. Goldfinger played
out of his bunker, but missed the longish putt. Now Bond
only one down.

They halved the dog-leg twelfth in inglorious five-

the longish thirteenth also in fives, Goldfinger having to hole a good putt to do so.

Now a tiny cleft of concentration had appeared on Goldfinger's massive, unlined forehead. He took a drink of water from the tap beside the fourteenth tee. Bond waited for him. He didn't want a sharp clang from that tin cup when it was out-of-bounds over the fence to the right and the drive into the breeze favouring a slice! Bond brought his left hand over to increase his draw and slowed down his swing. The drive, well to the left, was only just adequate, but at least it had stayed in bounds. Goldfinger, apparently unmoved by the out-of-bounds hazard, hit his standard shot. They both negotiated the transverse canal without damage and it was another half in five. Still one down and now only four to play.

The four hundred and sixty yards fifteenth is perhaps the only hole where the long hitter may hope to gain one clear shot. Two smashing woods will just get you over the line of bunkers that lie right up against the green. Goldfinger had to play short of them with his second. He could hardly improve on a five and it was up to Bond to hit a really godlike second shot from a barely adequate drive.

The sun was on its way down and the shadows of the four men were beginning to lengthen. Bond had taken up his stance. It was a good lie. He had kept his driver. There was dead silence as he gave his two incisive waggles. This was going to be a vital stroke. Remember to pause at the top of the swing, come down slow and whip the club head through at the last second. Bond began to take the club back. Something moved at the corner of his right eye. From nowhere the shadow of Goldfinger's huge head approached the ball on the ground, engulfed it and moved on. Bond let his swing take itself to pieces in sections. Then he stood away from his ball and looked up. Goldfinger's feet were still moving. He was looking carefully up at the sky.

"Shades please, Goldfinger." Bond's voice was furiously controlled.

Goldfinger stopped and looked slowly at Bond. The eyebrows were raised a fraction in inquiry. He moved back and stood still, saying nothing.

Bond went back to his ball. Now then, relax! To hell

th Goldfinger. Slam that ball on to the green. Just stand
all and hit it. There was a moment when the world stood
still, then . . . then somehow Bond did hit it—on a low
trajectory that mounted gracefully to carry the distant
surf of the bunkers. The ball hit the bank below the green,
bounced high with the impact and rolled out of sight into
the saucer round the pin.

Hawker came up and took the driver out of Bond's
hand. They walked on together. Hawker said seriously,
"That's one of the finest shots I've seen in thirty years." He
lowered his voice. "I thought he'd fixed you then, sir."

"He damned nearly did, Hawker. It was Alfred Blacking
that hit that ball, not me." Bond took out his cigarettes,
gave one to Hawker and lit his own. He said quietly, "All
square and three to play. We've got to watch those next-
three holes. Know what I mean?"

"Don't you worry, sir. I'll keep my eye on him."
They came up with the green. Goldfinger had pitched
on and had a long putt for a four, but Bond's ball was only
two inches away from the hole. Goldfinger picked up his
ball and walked off the green. They halved the short sixteenth
in good threes. Now there were the two long holes home.
Fours would win them. Bond hit a fine drive down the centre.
Goldfinger pushed his far out to the right into deep rough.
Bond walked along trying not to be too jubilant, trying not
to count his chickens. A win for him at this hole and he
would only need a half at the eighteenth for the match.
He prayed that Goldfinger's ball would be unplayable or
better still, lost.

Hawker had gone on ahead. He had already laid down
his bag and was busily—far too busily to Bond's way
thinking—searching for Goldfinger's ball when they came
up.

It was bad stuff—jungle country, deep thick luxur-
grass whose roots still held last night's dew. Unless
were very lucky, they couldn't hope to find the ball.
a few minutes' search Goldfinger and his caddie d-
away still wider to where the rough thinned out into iso-
tufts. That's good, thought Bond. That wasn't anything
the line. Suddenly he trod on something. Hell and damn!
Should he stamp it in? He shrugged his shoulders, bent
and gently uncovered the ball so as not to improve

lie. Yes it was a Dunlop 65. "Here you are," he called grudgingly. "Oh no, sorry. You play with a Number One, don't you?"

"Yes," came back Goldfinger's voice impatiently.

"Well, this is a Number Seven." Bond picked it up and walked over to Goldfinger.

Goldfinger gave the ball a cursory glance. He said, "Not mine," and went on poking among the tufts with the head of his driver.

It was a good ball, unmarked and almost new. Bond put it in his pocket and went back to his search. He glanced at his watch. The statutory five minutes was almost up. Another half-minute and by God he was going to claim the hole. Strict rules of golf, Goldfinger had stipulated. All right my friend, you shall have them!

Goldfinger was casting back towards Bond, diligently prodding and shuffling through the grass.

Bond said, "Nearly time, I'm afraid."

Goldfinger grunted. He started to say something when there came a cry from his caddie, "Here you are, sir. Number One Dunlop."

Bond followed Goldfinger over to where the caddie stood on a small plateau of higher ground. He was pointing down. Bond bent and inspected the ball. Yes, an almost new Dunlop One and in an astonishingly good lie. It was miraculous—more than miraculous. Bond stared hard from Goldfinger to his caddie. "Must have had the hell of a lucky kick," he said mildly.

The caddie shrugged his shoulders. Goldfinger's eyes were calm, untroubled. "So it would seem." He turned to his caddie. "I think we can get a spoon to that one, Foulks."

Bond walked thoughtfully away and then turned to watch the shot. It was one of Goldfinger's best. It soared over a far shoulder of rough towards the green. Might just have caught the bunker on the right.

Bond walked on to where Hawker, a long blade of grass dangling from his wry lips, was standing on the fairway watching the shot finish. Bond smiled bitterly at him. He said in a controlled voice, "Is my good friend in the bunker, or is the bastard on the green?"

"Green, sir," said Hawker unemotionally.

Bond went up to his ball. Now things had got tough

Once more he was fighting for a half after having a win in his pocket. He glanced towards the pin, the distance. This was a tricky one. He said, "or six?"

"One six should do it, sir. Nice firm shot." Hawker told him the club.

Now then, clear your mind. Keep it slow and deliberate. Get up the bank and on to the green. Stand still and get down. Click! The ball, hit with a slightly closed face, went off on just the medium trajectory Bond had wanted. It pitched below the bank. It was perfect! No, damn it. It didn't hit the bank with its second bounce, stopped dead, hesitated and then rolled back and down again. Hell's bells! Was it Hagen who had said, "You drive for show, but you putt for dough"? Getting dead from below that bank was one of the most difficult putts on the course. Bond reached for his cigarettes and lit one, already preparing his mind for the next crucial shot to save the hole—so long as that bastard Goldfinger didn't hole his from thirty feet!

Hawker walked along by his side. Bond said, "Miracle finding that ball."

"It wasn't his ball, sir." Hawker was stating a fact.

"What do you mean?" Bond's voice was tense.

"Money passed, sir. White, probably a fiver. Foulks must have dropped that ball down his trouser leg."

"Hawker!" Bond stopped in his tracks. He looked round. Goldfinger and his caddie were fifty yards away, walking slowly towards the green. Bond said fiercely, "Do you swear to that? How can you be sure?"

Hawker gave a half-ashamed, lop-sided grin. But there was a crafty belligerence in his eye. "Because his ball was lying under my bag of clubs, sir." When he saw Bond's open-mouthed expression he added apologetically, "Sorry, sir. Had to do it after what he's been doing to you. Wouldn't have mentioned it, but I had to let you know he's fixed you again."

Bond had to laugh. He said admiringly, "Well, you are a card, Hawker. So you were going to win the match for me all on your own!" He added bitterly, "But, by God, that man's the flaming limit. I've got to get him. I've simply got to. Now let's think!" They walked slowly on.

Bond's left hand was in his trousers pocket, absent-mindedly fingering the ball he had picked up in the rough. Suddenly the message went to his brain. Got it! He came close to Hawker. He glanced across at the others. Goldfinger had stopped. His back was to Bond and he was taking the putter out of his bag. Bond nudged Hawker. "Here, take this." He slipped the ball into the gnarled hand. Bond said softly, urgently, "Be certain you take the flag. When you pick up the balls from the green, whichever way the hole has gone, give Goldfinger this one. Right?"

Hawker walked stolidly forward. His face was expressionless. "Got it, sir," he said in his normal voice. "Will you take the putter for this one?"

"Yes." Bond walked up to his ball. "Give me a line, would you?"

Hawker walked up on to the green. He stood sideways to the line of the putt and then stalked round to behind the flag and crouched. He got up. "Inch outside the right lip, sir. Firm putt. Flag, sir?"

"No. Leave it in, would you."

Hawker stood away. Goldfinger was standing by his ball on the right of the green. His caddie had stopped at the bottom of the slope. Bond bent to the putt. Come on, Calamity Jane! This one has got to go dead or I'll put you across my knee. Stand still. Club head straight back on the line and follow through towards the hole. Give it a chance. Now! The ball, hit firmly in the middle of the club, had run up the bank and was on its way to the hole. But too hard, damn it! Hit the stick! Obediently the ball curved in, rapped the stick hard and bounced back three inches—dead as a doornail!

Bond let out a deep sigh and picked up his discarded cigarette. He looked over at Goldfinger. Now then, you bastard. Sweat that one out. And by God if you hole it! But Goldfinger couldn't afford to try. He stopped two feet short. "All right, all right," said Bond generously. "All square and one to go." It was vital that Hawker should pick up the balls. If he had made Goldfinger hole the short putt it would have been Goldfinger who would have picked the ball out of the hole. Anyway, Bond didn't want Goldfinger to miss that putt. That wasn't part of the plan.

Hawker bent down and picked up the balls. He rolled

...towards Bond and handed the other to Goldfinger.
...walked off the green, Goldfinger leading as usual.
...noticed Hawker's hand go to his pocket. Now, so long
...Goldfinger didn't notice anything on the tee!
...ut, with all square and one to go, you don't scrutinize
...r ball. Your motions are more or less automatic. You
...thinking of how to place your drive, of whether to go
...the green with the second or play to the apron, of the
...length of the wind—of the vital figure four that must some-
...ow be achieved to win or at least to halve.
...Considering that Bond could hardly wait for Goldfinger
...o follow him and hit, just once, that treacherous Dunlop
...Number Seven that looked so very like a Number One,
...Bond's own drive down the four hundred and fifty yard
...eighteenth was praiseworthy. If he wanted to, he could now
...reach the green—if he wanted to!

Now Goldfinger was on the tee. Now he had bent down.
The ball was on the peg, its lying face turned up at him.
But Goldfinger had straightened, had stood back, was
taking his two deliberate practice swings. He stepped up
to the ball, cautiously, deliberately. Stood over it, waggled,
focusing the ball minutely. Surely he would see! Surely he
would stop and bend down at the last minute to inspect the
ball! Would the waggle never end? But now the club head
was going back, coming down, the left knee bent correctly
in towards the ball, the left arm straight as a ramrod. Crack!
The ball sailed off, a beautiful drive, as good as Goldfinger
had hit, straight down the fairway.

Bond's heart sang. Got you, you bastard! Got you!
Blithely Bond stepped down from the tee and strolled off
down the fairway planning the next steps which could now
be as eccentric, as fiendish as he wished. Goldfinger was
beaten already—hoist with his own petard! Now to roast him
slowly, exquisitely.

Bond had no compunction. Goldfinger had cheated him
twice and got away with it. But for his cheats at the Vir-
and the seventeenth, not to mention his improved lie
the third and the various times he had tried to put B-
off, Goldfinger would have been beaten by now. If it ne-
one cheat by Bond to rectify the score-sheet that was
poetic justice. And besides, there was more to this th-
game of golf. It was Bond's duty to win. By his readi-

Goldfinger he *had* to win. If he was beaten, the score between the two men would have been equalized. If he won the match, as he now had, he would be two up on Goldfinger—an intolerable state of affairs, Bond guessed, to a man who saw himself as all powerful. This man Bond, Goldfinger would say to himself, *has* something. He has qualities I can use. He is a tough adventurer with plenty of tricks up his sleeve. This is the sort of man I need for—for what? Bond didn't know. Perhaps there would be nothing for him. Perhaps his reading of Goldfinger was wrong, but there was certainly no other way of creeping up on the man.

Goldfinger cautiously took out his spoon for the longish second over cross-bunkers to the narrow entrance to the green. He made one more practice swing than usual and then hit exactly the right, controlled shot up to the apron. A certain five, probably a four. Much good would it do him!

Bond, after a great show of taking pains, brought his hands down well ahead of the club and smothered his number-three iron so that the topped ball barely scrambled over the cross-bunkers. He then wedged the ball on to the green twenty feet past the pin. He was where he wanted to be—enough of a threat to make Goldfinger savour the sweet smell of victory, enough to make Goldfinger really sweat to get his four.

And now Goldfinger really was sweating. There was a savage grin of concentration and greed as he bent to the long putt up the bank and down to the hole. Not too hard, not too soft. Bond could read every anxious thought that would be running through the man's mind. Goldfinger straightened up again, walked deliberately across the green to behind the flag to verify his line. He walked slowly back beside his line, brushing away—carefully, with the back of his hand—a wisp or two of grass, a speck of top-dressing. He bent again and made one or two practice swings and then stood to the putt, the veins standing out on his temples, the cleft of concentration deep between his eyes.

Goldfinger hit the putt and followed through on the line. It was a beautiful putt that stopped six inches past the pin. Now Goldfinger would be sure that unless Bond sank his difficult twenty-footer, the match was his!

Bond went through a long rigmarole of sizing up his putt. He took his time, letting the suspense gather like a

thunder cloud round the long shadows on the livid, fateful green.

"Flag out, please. I'm going to sink this one." Bond charged the words with a deadly certitude, while debating whether to miss the hole to the right or the left or leave it short. He bent to the putt and missed the hole well on the right.

"Missed it, by God!" Bond put bitterness and rage into his voice. He walked over to the hole and picked up the two balls, keeping them in full view.

Goldfinger came up. His face was glistening with triumph. "Well, thanks for the game. Seems I was just too good for you after all."

"You're a good nine handicap," said Bond with just sufficient sourness. He glanced at the balls in his hand to pick out Goldfinger's and hand it to him. He gave a start of surprise. "Hullo!" He looked sharply at Goldfinger. "You play a Number One Dunlop, don't you?"

"Yes, of course." A sixth sense of disaster wiped the triumph off Goldfinger's face. "What is it? What's the matter?"

"Well," said Bond apologetically. "Fraid you've been playing with the wrong ball. Here's my Penfold Hearts and this is a Number Seven Dunlop." He handed both balls to Goldfinger. Goldfinger tore them off his palm and examined them feverishly.

Slowly the colour flooded over Goldfinger's face. He stood, his mouth working, looking from the balls to Bond and back to the balls.

Bond said softly, "Too bad we were playing to the rules. Afraid that means you lose the hole. And, of course, the match." Bond's eyes observed Goldfinger impassively.

"But, but..."

This was what Bond had been looking forward to—the cup dashed from the lips. He stood and waited, saying nothing.

Rage suddenly burst Goldfinger's usually relaxed face like a bomb. "It was a Dunlop Seven you found in the rough. It was your caddie that gave me this ball. On the seventeenth green. He gave me the wrong ball on purpose, the damned che—"

"Here, steady on," said Bond mildly. "You'll get a slander

action on your hands if you aren't careful. Hawker, did you give Mr Goldfinger the wrong ball by mistake or anything?"

"No, sir." Hawker's face was stolid. He said indifferently, "If you want my opinion, sir, the mistake may have been made at the seventeenth when the gentleman found his ball pretty far off the line we'd all marked it on. A Seven looks very much like a One. I'd say that's what happened, sir. It would have been a miracle for the gentleman's ball to have ended up as wide as where it was found."

"Tommy rot!" Goldfinger gave a snort of disgust. He turned angrily on Bond. "You saw that was a Number One my caddie found."

Bond shook his head doubtfully. "I didn't really look closely, I'm afraid. However," Bond's voice became brisk, businesslike, "it's really the job of the player to make certain he's using the right ball, isn't it? I can't see that anyone else can be blamed if you tee the wrong ball up and play three shots with it. Anyway," he started walking off the green, "many thanks for the match. We must have it again one day."

Goldfinger, lit with glory by the setting sun, but with a long black shadow tied to his heels, followed Bond slowly, his eyes fixed thoughtfully on Bond's back.

CHAPTER IO

UP AT THE GRANGE

THERE are some rich men who use their riches like a club. Bond, luxuriating in his bath, thought that Goldfinger was one of them. He was the kind of man who thought he could flatten the world with his money, bludgeoning aside annoyances and opposition with his heavy wad. He had thought to break Bond's nerve by playing him for ten thousand dollars—a flea-bite to him but obviously a small fortune to Bond. In most circumstances he might have succeeded. It needs an iron nerve to 'wait for it' on your swing, to keep your head down on the short putts, when big money hangs on every shot, over eighteen long holes. The

playing for their own bread and butter and for
ies', know the cold breath of the poor-house on the
of their necks as they come to the eighteenth tee all
are. That is why they lead careful lives, not smoking or
aking, and why the one that wins is usually the one with the
st imagination.

But, in Bond's case, Goldfinger could not have known
at high tension was Bond's natural way of life and that
pressure and danger relaxed him. And he could not have
known that Bond wanted to play Goldfinger for the highest
possible stakes and that he would have the funds of the
Secret Service behind him if he lost. Goldfinger, so used to
manipulating others, had been blind to the manipulation
for once being practised upon himself.

Or had he been? Thoughtfully Bond got out of the bath
and dried himself. That powerful dynamo inside the big
round head would be humming at this very moment, wonder-
ing about Bond, knowing he had been out-cheated, asking
itself how it came about that twice Bond had appeared out
of the blue and twice queered his pitch. Had Bond played
his cards right? Had he made himself appear an interesting
challenge, or would Goldfinger's sensitive nose smell a
threat? In the latter case there would be no follow-up by
Goldfinger and Bond would have to bow out of the case
and leave it to M to devise a new approach. How soon
would he know if the big fish was hooked? This one would
take plenty of time sniffing the bait. It would be good to have
just one small bite to tell him he had chosen the right lure.

There was a knock on the door of his bedroom. Bond
wrapped the towel round him and walked through. He
opened the door. It was the hall porter. "Yes?"

"Telephone message from a Mr Goldfinger, sir. He
compliments and would you care to come to his house for
dinner tonight. It's the Grange over at Reculver, sir. S

thirty for drinks beforehand and not to bother to dress."
"Please thank Mr Goldfinger and say I shall be delighted
Bond shut the door and walked across to the open win
and stood looking out across the quiet evening sea. "V
well! Talk of the devil!" Bond smiled to himself, "And
go and sup with him! What was that about a long spoon

At six o'clock Bond went down to the bar and
large vodka and tonic with a slice of lemon peel. T

was empty save for a group of American Air Force officers from Manston. They were drinking whisky and water and talking baseball. Bond wondered if they had spent the day toting a hydrogen bomb round the skies over Kent, over the four little dots in the dunes that had been his match with Goldfinger. He thought wryly, Not too much of that whisky, cousins, paid for his drink, and left.

He motored slowly over to Reculver, savouring the evening and the drink inside him and the quiet bubble of the twin exhausts. This was going to be an interesting dinner-party. Now was the moment to sell himself to Goldfinger. If he put a foot wrong he was out, and the pitch would have been badly queered for his successor. He was unarmed—it would be fatal for Goldfinger to smell that kind of rat. He felt a moment's qualm. But that was going too fast. No state of war had been declared—the opposite if anything. When they had parted at the golf club, Goldfinger had been cordial in a rather forced, oily fashion. He had inquired where he should send Bond's winnings and Bond had given him the address of Universal Export. He had asked where Bond was staying and Bond had told him and added that he would only be at Ramsgate a few days while he made up his mind about his future. Goldfinger hoped that they would one day have a return match but, alas, he was leaving for France tomorrow and wasn't certain when he would be back. Flying? Yes, taking the Air Ferry from Lydd. Well, thanks for the match. And thank you, Mr Bond. The eyes had given Bond one last X-ray treatment, as if fixing him for a last time in Goldfinger's filing system, and then the big yellow car had sighed away.

Bond had had a good look at the chauffeur. He was a chunky flat-faced Japanese, or more probably Korean, with a wild, almost mad glare in dramatically slanting eyes that belonged in a Japanese film rather than in a Rolls Royce on a sunny afternoon in Kent. He had the snout-like upper lip that sometimes goes with a cleft palate, but he said nothing and Bond had no opportunity of knowing whether his guess was right. In his tight, almost bursting black suit and farcical bowler hat he looked rather like a Japanese wrestler on his day off. But he was not a figure to make one smile. If one had been inclined to smile, a touch of the sinister, the unexplained, in the tight shining patent-leather black shoes

that were almost dancing pumps, and in the heavy black leather driving gloves, would have changed one's mind. There was something vaguely familiar to Bond in the man's silhouette. It was when the car drove away and Bond had a glimpse of the head from the rear that he remembered. Those were the head and shoulders and bowler hat of the driver of the sky-blue Ford Popular that had so obstinately hugged the crown of the Herne Bay road at about twelve o'clock that morning. Where had he been coming from? What errand had he been on? Bond remembered something Colonel Smithers had said. Could this have been the Korean who now travelled the country collecting the old gold from the chain of Goldfinger jewellery shops? Had the boot of the innocent, scurrying little saloon been stuffed with the week's takings of presentation watches, signet rings, lockets, gold crosses? As he watched the high, primrose-yellow silhouette of the Silver Ghost disappearing towards Sandwich, Bond thought the answer was yes.

Bond turned off the main road into the drive and followed it down between high Victorian evergreens to the gravel sweep in front of just the sort of house that would be called The Grange—a heavy, ugly, turn-of-the-century mansion with a glass-enclosed portico and sun parlour whose smell of trapped sunshine, rubber plants and dead flies came to Bond in his imagination before he had switched off the engine. Bond got slowly out of the car and stood looking at the house. Its blank, well-washed eyes stared back at him. The house had a background noise, a heavy rhythmic pant like a huge animal with a rather quick pulse. Bond assumed it came from the factory whose plumed chimney reared up like a giant cautionary finger from the high conifers to the right where the stabling and garages would normally be. The quiet watchful façade of the house seemed to be waiting for Bond to do something, make some offensive move to which there would be a quick reply. Bond shrugged his shoulders to lighten his thoughts and went up the steps to the opaque glass-panelled door and pressed the bell. There was no noise of it ringing, but the door slowly opened. The Korean chauffeur still had his bowler hat on. He looked without interest at Bond. He stood motionless, his left hand on the inside doorknob and his outstretched right pointing like a signpost into the dark hall of the house.

Bond walked past him, vanquishing a desire either to stamp on his neat black feet or hit him very hard indeed in the centre of his tightly buttoned black stomach. This Korean matched up with what he had always heard about Koreans, and anyway Bond wanted to do something violent to the heavy, electric atmosphere of the house.

The gloomy hall was also the main living-room. A meagre fire flickered behind the fire-irons in the wide hearth and two club chairs and a Knole sofa stood impassively watching the flames. Between them on a low settee was a well-stocked drink tray. The wide spaces surrounding this spark of life were crowded with massive Rothschildian pieces of furniture of the Second Empire, and ormolu, tortoiseshell, brass and mother-of-pearl winked back richly at the small fire. Behind this orderly museum, dark panelling ran up to a first-floor gallery which was reached by a heavy curved stairway to the left of the hall. The ceiling was laced with the sombre wood-carving of the period.

Bond was standing taking all this in when the Korean came silently up. He flung out his signpost of an arm towards the drink tray and the chairs. Bond nodded and stayed where he was. The Korean walked past him and disappeared through a door into what Bond assumed were the servants' quarters. The silence, helped by the slow iron tick of a massively decorated grandfather clock, gathered and crept nearer.

Bond walked over and stood with his back to the poor fire. He stared offensively back at the room. What a dump! What a bloody awful deathly place to live in. How did one, could one, live in this rich heavy morgue amongst the conifers and evergreens when a hundred yards away there was light and air and wide horizons? Bond took out a cigarette and lit it. What did Goldfinger do for enjoyment, for fun, for sex? Perhaps he didn't need these things. Perhaps the pursuit of gold slaked all his thirsts.

Somewhere in the distance a telephone rang. The bell shrilled twice and stopped. There was the murmur of a voice, then steps echoed down a passage and a door under the stairway opened. Goldfinger came through and quietly closed the door behind him. He was wearing a plum-coloured velvet dinner jacket. He came slowly across the polished wood floor. He didn't hold out his hand. He said, smiling with his

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It was kind of you to come at such a time. You were alone and so was I and it occurred to me I might discuss the price of corn." The sort of remark that rich men make to each other. He said, "I was delighted to get the invitation. I was already bored with worrying over my problems. Rams-

...asn't much to offer." "And now I have an apology to make. I have had a phone call. One of my staff—I employ Koreans, by the way—has had some minor trouble with the Margate police. I must go over and straighten it out. Some incident at the fun fair, I understand. These people get easily over-excited. My chauffeur will drive me and we should not be more than half an hour. Meanwhile I fear I must leave you to your own devices. Please help yourself to drinks. There are magazines to read. Will you forgive me? Not more than half an hour I assure you."

"That's quite all right." Bond felt there was something fishy in this. He couldn't put his finger on what it was. "Well then, au revoir." Goldfinger went to the front door. "But I must give you some light. It's really very dark in here." Goldfinger brushed his hand down a wall-plate of switches and suddenly lights blazed all over the hall—from standard lamps, wall brackets, and four clusters in the ceiling. Now the room was as bright as a film studio. It was an extraordinary transformation. Bond, half dazzled, watched Goldfinger open the front door and stride out. In a minute he heard the sound of a car, but not the Rolls, rev up noisily, change gear and go off fast down the drive. On an instinct, Bond walked over to the front door and opened it. The drive was empty. In the distance he saw the lights of the car turn left-handed on the main road, and make off in the direction of Margate. He turned back into the house and closed the door. He stood still, listening. The silence, except for the heavy clock-tick, was complete. He walked across to the service door and opened it. A long dark passage disappeared towards the back of the house. Bond bent forward, all his senses alert. Still dead silence. Bond shut the door and looked though round the brilliantly lit hall. He had been left alone in Goldfinger's house, alone with its secrets. Why?

Bond walked over to the drink tray and poured himself a strong gin and tonic. There certainly had been a telephone call, but it could easily have been an arranged call from the factory. The story of the servant was plausible and it was reasonable that Goldfinger should go himself to bail the man out and take his chauffeur with him. Goldfinger had twice mentioned that Bond would be alone for half an hour during which he "would be left to his own devices". This could be innocent, or it could be an invitation for Bond to show his hand, commit some indiscretion. Was somebody watching him? How many of these Koreans were there and what were they doing? Bond glanced at his watch. Five minutes had gone. He made up his mind. Trap or no trap, this was too good a chance to miss. He would have a quick look round—but an innocent one, with some sort of a cover story to explain why he had left the hall. Where should he begin? A look at the factory. His story? That his car had given trouble on the way over—choked petrol feed probably—and that he had gone to see if there was a mechanic who could give him a hand. Flimsy, but it would do. Bond downed his drink and went purposefully to the service door and walked through.

There was a light switch. He turned on the light and walked swiftly down a long passage. It ended with a blank wall and two doors to right and left. He listened for an instant at the left-hand one and heard muffled kitchen noises. He opened the right-hand door and found himself in the paved garage yard he might have expected. The only odd thing about it was that it was brilliantly lit by arc lights. The long wall of the factory occupied the far side and now the rhythmic engine thump was very loud. There was a plain wooden door low down in the wall opposite. Bond walked across the yard to it, looking around him with casual interest. The door was unlocked. He opened it with discretion and walked through, leaving the door ajar. He found himself in a small empty office lit by one naked bulb hanging from the ceiling. There was a desk with papers on it, a time-clock, a couple of filing cabinets and a telephone. Another door led from the office into the main factory space and there was a window beside the door for keeping an eye on the workmen. It would be the foreman's office. Bond walked to the window and looked through.

didn't know what he had expected, but there were the usual accoutrements of a small metal-working shop. Facing him were the open mouths of two blast furnaces, their fires now drawn. Beside these stood a row of colours stood against the wall near by. There was the polished steel table of a circular saw, a diamond saw prearranged for cutting the sheets, and to the left in the shadows a big oil engine connected to a generator pounded away for power. To the right, under arc lights, a group of men in overalls, four of them Koreans, were at work on one of all things—Goldfinger's Rolls Royce. It stood there gleaming under the lights, immaculate save for the right-hand door which had been taken off its hinges and now lay across two nearby benches minus its door panel. As Bond watched, two men picked up the new door panel, a heavy, discoloured sheet of aluminium-coloured metal, and placed it on the door frame. There were two hand riveters on the floor and soon, Bond thought, the men would rivet the panel into place and paint it to match the rest of the car. All perfectly innocent and above-board. Goldfinger had done the panel that afternoon and had had a quick repair job done in preparation for his trip tomorrow. Bond gave a quick, sour look round, withdrew from the window and went out by the factory door and closed it softly behind him. Nothing there, damn it. And now what was his story? That he had not wanted to disturb the men at their work—perhaps after dinner, if one of them had a moment.

Bond walked unhurriedly back the way he had come and regained the hall without misadventure. Bond looked at his watch. Ten minutes to go. Now for the first floor. The secrets of a house are in the bedrooms and bathrooms. Those are the private places where the medicine cabinets, the dressing-table, the bedside drawers reveal the intimate things, the frailties. Bond had a bad headache. He had gone to look for an aspirin. He acted the part for an invisible audience, massaged his temple, glanced up at the gallery, walked decisively across the floor and climbed the stairs. The gallery gave on to a bright lit passage. Bond walked down it opening the doors and glancing in. But they were spare bedrooms, the beds made up. They held a smell of must and shut windows.

A large ginger cat appeared from nowhere and followed him, mewling and rubbing itself against his trouser legs. The end room was the one. Bond went in and closed the door to a crack.

All the lights were on. Perhaps one of the servants was in the bathroom. Bond walked boldly across to the communicating door and opened it. More lights, but no one. It was a big bathroom, probably a spare room converted into a bathroom and, in addition to the bath and lavatory, it held various fitness machines—a rowing machine, a fixed bicycle wheel, Indian clubs and a Ralli Health Belt. The medicine cabinet contained nothing except a great variety of purges—senna pods, cascara, Calsalettes, Enos and various apparatus for the same purpose. There were no other drugs and no aspirin. Bond went back into the bedroom and again drew a blank. It was a typical man's room, comfortable, lived in, with plenty of fitted cupboards. It even smelled neutral. There was a small bookcase beside the bed in which all the books were history or biography, all in English. The drawer of the bedside table yielded a solitary indiscretion, a yellow-backed copy of *The Hidden Sight of Love*, Palladium Publications, Paris.

Bond glanced at his watch. Five more minutes. It was time to go. He took a last look round the room and moved to the door. Suddenly he stopped. What was it he had noticed almost subconsciously ever since he had come into the room? He sharpened his senses. There was an incongruity somewhere. What was it? A colour? An object? A smell? A sound? That was it! From where he stood he could hear the faintest, mosquito-shrill whine. It was almost extra-sensory in its pitch. Where did it come from? What was making it? Now there was something else in the room, something that Bond knew all too well, the smell of danger.

Tensely Bond stepped closer to the fitted cupboard beside the door, softly opened it. Yes, it came from inside the cupboard, from behind a range of sports coats that reached down to the top of three banks of drawers. Sharply Bond swept the coats aside. His jaws clenched at what was behind them.

From three slots near the top of the cupboard, ~~seven~~ millimetre film was inching down in three separate ~~slots~~ into a deep bin behind the false front of the ~~cupboard~~

almost half full of the slimy snakes. His eyes narrowed tensely as he watched the damning coil slowly down on to the pile. So that was it—where—in the hall, in the garage courtyard, in this place—had been watching his every move from the moment of course, the dazzling lights, as he went out of the house, switching on the cameras, r. Why hadn't Bond seen the significance of those lights? Why hadn't he had the elementary imagination to see the use as well as smell it? Cover stories, indeed! What use were they now when he had spent half an hour snooping round and finding nothing for his pains? That too! He had discovered nothing—unearthed no secret. It had all been an idiotic waste of time. And now Goldfinger had him. Now he was finished, hopelessly blown. Was there any way of saving something from the wreckage? Bond stood riveted, staring at the slow cataracts of film.

Let's see now! Bond's mind raced, thinking of ways out, excuses, discarding them all. Well, at least by opening the cupboard door he had exposed some of the film. Then why not expose it all? Why not, but how? How could the open cupboard door be explained except by his doing? There came a miaow from the open slit of the bedroom door. The cat! Why shouldn't the cat have done it? Pretty thin, but at least it was the shadow of an alibi. Bond opened the door. He picked the cat up in his arms. He went back with it to the cupboard, stroking it brusquely. It purred. Bond leant over the bin of film, picking it up in handfuls so that it would all get the light. Then, when he was satisfied that it must be ruined, he tossed it back and dropped the cat in on top of it. The cat would not be able to get out easily. With any luck it would settle down and go to sleep. Bond left the cupboard door three inches ajar to spoil the continuing film and the bedroom door the same amount and ran down the passage. At the top of the stairs he slowed and sauntered down. The empty hall yawned at his play-acting. He walked across to the fireplace, dashed more drink into his glass and picked up *The Field*. He turned to the commentary by Bernard Darwin, ran his eye down to see what it was about, and then settled into one of the chairs and lit a cigarette.

What had he found out? What was there on the plus side? Precious little except that Goldfinger suffered from constipation and a dirty mind and that he had wanted to put Bond through an elementary test. He had certainly done it expertly. This was no amateur. The technique was fully up to SMERSH standards, and it was surely the technique of somebody with a very great deal to hide. And now what would happen? For the cat alibi to stand up, Goldfinger would have to have left two doors, one of them vital, ajar, and the cat had got into the room and been intrigued by the whine of the cameras. Most unlikely, almost incredible. Goldfinger would be ninety per cent certain it was Bond—but only ninety. There would still be that ten per cent of uncertainty. Would Goldfinger have learnt much more than he knew before—that Bond was a tricky, resourceful customer and that Bond had been inquisitive, might be a thief? He would guess Bond had been to the bedroom, but Bond's other movements, for whatever they were worth, would remain a secret on the exposed film.

Bond got up and took a handful of other magazines and threw them down beside his chair. The only thing for him to do was brazen it out and make a note for the future, if there was to be a future, that he had better wake his ideas up and not make any more mistakes. There wouldn't be enough ginger cats in the world to help him out of one more tight spot like the one he was in.

There had been no noise of a car coming down the drive, not a sound from the door, but Bond felt the evening breeze on his neck and he knew that Goldfinger had come back into the room.

CHAPTER II

THE ODD-JOB MAN

BOND THREW down *The Field* and stood up. The front door closed noisily. Bond turned. "Hullo." His face registered polite surprise. "Didn't hear you arrive. How did it go?"

ger's expression was equally bland. "Oh, it's old friends, neighbours in the country who were supposed to drop in on each other for a drink. My chap had had a row in a pub with the American Air Force men who had called him a bloody Japs. They let him off with a caution. Terribly sorry he's been so long. Hope you weren't bored. Do have another drink."

Thanks. But it's hardly seemed five minutes since you've been reading what Darwin has to say about the four-club rule. Interesting point of view . . ." Bond launched into a detailed review of the article, adding his own comments on the rule.

Goldfinger stood patiently until it was over. He said, "Yes, it's a complicated business. Of course you play rather a different game from me, more workmanlike. With my kind of swing, I find I need all the clubs I'm allowed. Well, I'll just go up and wash and then we'll have dinner. Shan't be a moment."

Bond busied himself noisily with pouring another drink, sat down and picked up *Country Life*. He watched Goldfinger climb the stairs and disappear down the corridor. He could visualize every step. He found he was reading the periodical upside down. He turned it round and stared blindly at a fine photograph of Blenheim Palace.

There was dead silence upstairs. Then a distant lavatory chain was pulled and a door clicked shut. Bond reached for his drink, took a deep swallow and put the glass down beside his chair. Goldfinger was coming down the stairs. Bond turned the pages of *Country Life* and flicked ash off his cigarette into the grate.

Now Goldfinger was crossing the floor towards him. Bond lowered his paper and looked up. Goldfinger was carrying the ginger cat tucked carelessly under one arm. He reached the fireplace, bent forward and pressed the bell.

He turned towards Bond. "Do you like cats?" His gaze was flat, incurious.

"Sufficiently."

The service door opened. The chauffeur stood in the frame. He still wore his bowler hat and his shiny black gloves. He gazed impassively at Goldfinger. Goldfinger

crooked a finger. The chauffeur approached and stood within the circle by the fire.

Goldfinger turned to Bond. He said conversationally, "This is my handy man." He smiled thinly. "That is something of a joke. Oddjob, show Mr Bond your hands." He smiled again at Bond. "I call him Oddjob because that describes his functions on my staff."

The Korean slowly pulled off his gloves and came and stood at arm's length from Bond and held out his hands palm upwards. Bond got up and looked at them. They were big and fat with muscle. The fingers all seemed to be the same length. They were very blunt at the tips and the tips glinted as if they were made of yellow bone.

"Turn them over and show Mr Bond the sides."

There were no fingernails. Instead there was this same, yellowish carapace. The man turned the hands sideways. Down each edge of the hands was a hard ridge of the same bony substance.

Bond raised his eyebrows at Goldfinger.

Goldfinger said, "We will have a demonstration." He pointed at the thick oak banisters that ran up the stairs. The rail was a massive six inches by four thick. The Korean obediently walked over to the stairs and climbed a few steps. He stood with his hands at his sides, gazing across at Goldfinger like a good retriever. Goldfinger gave a quick nod. Impassively the Korean lifted his right hand high and straight above his head and brought the side of it down like an axe across the heavy polished rail. There was a splintering crash and the rail sagged, broken through the centre. Again the hand went up and flashed down. This time it swept right through the rail leaving a jagged gap. Splinters clattered down on to the floor of the hall. The Korean straightened himself and stood to attention, waiting for further orders. There was no flush of effort in his face and no hint of pride in his achievement.

Goldfinger beckoned. The man came back across the floor. Goldfinger said, "His feet are the same, the outside edges of them. Oddjob, the mantelpiece." Goldfinger pointed at the heavy shelf of carved wood above the fireplace. It was about seven-feet off the ground—six inches higher than the top of the Korean's bowler hat.

"Garch a har?"

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There were no fingernails. Instead there was this same, yellowish carapace. The man turned the hands sideways. Down each edge of the hands was a hard ridge of the same bony substance.

Bond raised his eyebrows at Goldfinger.

Goldfinger said, "We will have a demonstration." He pointed at the thick oak banisters that ran up the stairs. The rail was a massive six inches by four thick. The Korean obediently walked over to the stairs and climbed a few steps. He stood with his hands at his sides, gazing across at Goldfinger like a good retriever. Goldfinger gave a quick nod. Impassively the Korean lifted his right hand high and straight above his head and brought the side of it down like an axe across the heavy polished rail. There was a splintering crash and the rail sagged, broken through the centre. Again the hand went up and flashed down. This time it swept right through the rail leaving a jagged gap. Splinters clattered down on to the floor of the hall. The Korean straightened himself and stood to attention, waiting for further orders. There was no flush of effort in his face and no hint of pride in his achievement.

Goldfinger beckoned. The man came back across the floor. Goldfinger said, "His feet are the same, the outside edges of them. Oddjob, the mantelpiece." Goldfinger pointed at the heavy shelf of carved wood above the fireplace. It was about seven feet off the ground—six inches higher than the top of the Korean's bowler hat.

"Garch a har?"

Yes, take off your coat and hat." Goldfinger
id. "Poor chap's got a cleft palate. I shouldn't think
re are many people who understand him beside me."
Bond reflected how useful that would be, a slave who
uld only communicate with the world through his in-
preter—better even than the deaf mutes of the harems,
ore tightly bound to his master, more secure.
Oddjob had taken off his coat and hat and placed them
neatly on the floor. Now he rolled his trouser legs up to the
knee and stood back in the wide well-planted stance of the
judo expert. He looked as if a charging elephant wouldn't
put him off balance.

"Better stand back, Mr Bond." The teeth glittered in the
wide mouth. "This blow snaps a man's neck like a daffodil."
Goldfinger drew aside the low settee with the drink tray.
Now the Korean had a clear run. But he was only three
long steps away. How could he possibly reach the high
mantelpiece?

Bond watched, fascinated. Now the slanting eyes in the
flat yellow mask were glinting with a fierce intentness.
Faced by such a man, thought Bond, one could only go
down on one's knees and wait for death.

Goldfinger lifted his hand. The bunched toes in the
polished soft leather shoes seemed to grip the ground. The
Korean took one long crouching stride with knees well
bent and then whirled off the ground. In mid-air his feet
slapped together like a ballet dancer's, but higher than a
ballet dancer's have ever reached, and then the body bent
sideways and downwards and the right foot shot out like
a piston. There came a crashing thud. Gracefully the body
settled back down on the hands, now splayed on the floor,
the elbows bent to take the weight and then straightened
sharply to throw the man up and back on his feet.

Oddjob stood to attention. This time there was a gleam
of triumph in his flat eyes as he looked at the three-inch
jagged bite the edge of his foot had taken out of the mantel-
piece.

Bond looked at the man in deep awe. And only
nights ago, he, Bond, had been working on his manual
unarmed combat! There was nothing, absolutely nothing
in all his reading, all his experience, to approach what
had just witnessed. This was not a man of flesh and bone

This was a living club, perhaps the most dangerous animal on the face of the earth. Bond had to do it, had to give homage to this uniquely dreadful person. He held out his hand.

"Softly, Oddjob." Goldfinger's voice was the crack of a whip.

The Korean bowed his head and took Bond's hand in his. He kept his fingers straight and merely bent his thumb in a light clasp. It was like holding a piece of board. He released Bond's hand and went to his neat pile of clothes.

"Forgive me, Mr Bond, and I appreciate your gesture." Goldfinger's face showed his approval. "But Oddjob doesn't know his own strength—particularly when he is keyed up. And those hands are like machine-tools. He could have crushed your hand to pulp without meaning to. Now then," Oddjob had dressed and was standing respectfully at attention, "you did well, Oddjob. I'm glad to see you are in training. Here—" Goldfinger took the cat from under his arm and tossed it to the Korean who caught it eagerly—"I am tired of seeing this animal around. You may have it for dinner." The Korean's eyes gleamed. "And tell them in the kitchen that we will have our own dinner at once."

The Korean inclined his head sharply and turned away.

Bond hid his disgust. He realized that all this exhibition was simply a message to him, a warning, a light rap on the knuckles. It said, "You see my power, Mr Bond. I could easily have killed you or maimed you. Oddjob was giving an exhibition and you got in the way. I would certainly be innocent, and Oddjob would get off with a light sentence. Instead, the cat will be punished in your place. Bad luck on the cat, of course."

Bond said casually, "Why does the man always wear that bowler hat?"

"Oddjob!" The Korean had reached the service door. "The hat." Goldfinger pointed at a panel in the woodwork near the fireplace.

Still holding the cat under his left arm, Oddjob turned and walked stolidly back towards them. When he was half way across the floor, and without pausing or taking aim, he reached up to his hat, took it by the rim and flung it sideways with all his force. There was a loud clang. For an instant the rim of the bowler hat stuck an inch deep in the panel Gold-

finger had indicated, then it fell and clattered on the floor.

Goldfinger smiled politely at Bond. "A light but very strong alloy, Mr Bond. I fear that will have damaged the felt covering, but Oddjob will put on another. He's surprisingly quick with a needle and thread. As you can imagine, that blow would have smashed a man's skull or half severed his neck. A homely and a most ingeniously concealed weapon, I'm sure you'll agree."

"Yes, indeed." Bond smiled with equal politeness. "Useful chap to have around."

Oddjob had picked up his hat and disappeared. There came the boom of a gong. "Ah, dinner! Shall we go in?" Goldfinger led the way to a door concealed in the paneling to the right of the fireplace. He pressed a hidden latch and they walked through.

The small dining-room matched the heavy wealth of the hall. It was brilliantly lit from a central chandelier and by candles on a round table that glittered with silver and glass. They sat down opposite each other. Two yellow-faced servants in white mess-jackets brought dishes from a loaded serving-table. The first course was some curried mess with rice. Goldfinger noticed Bond's hesitation. He gave a dry chuckle. "It's all right, Mr Bond. Shrimp, not the cat."

"Ah." Bond's expression was non-committal.

"Please try the Moselle. I hope it will be to your taste. It is a Piesporter Goldtröpfchen '53. Help yourself. These people are as likely to pour it into your plate as your glass."

There was a slim bottle in an ice bucket in front of Bond. He poured some of the wine and tasted it. It was nectar and ice cold. Bond congratulated his host. Goldfinger gave a curt nod.

"I don't myself drink or smoke, Mr Bond. Smoking, I find the most ridiculous of all the varieties of human behaviour and practically the only one that is entirely against nature. Can you imagine a cow or any animal taking a mouthful of smouldering straw then breathing in the smoke and blowing it out through its nostrils? Pahl!" Goldfinger showed a rare trace of emotion. "It is a vile practice. As for drinking, I am something of a chemist and I have yet to find a liquor that is free from traces of a number of poisons, some of them deadly, such as fusel oil, acetic acid, ethyl-acetate, acetaldehyde and furfural. A quantity of some of these

poisons taken neat would kill you. In the small amounts you find in a bottle of liquor they produce various ill effects most of which are lightly written off as 'a hangover.'" Goldfinger paused with a forkful of curried shrimp half way to his mouth. "Since you are a drinker, Mr Bond, I will give you one word of good advice. Never drink so-called Napoleon brandy, particularly when it is described as 'aged in the wood'. That particular potion contains more of the poisons I have mentioned than any other liquor I have analysed. Old bourbon comes next." Goldfinger closed his animadversions with a mouthful of shrimp.

"Thank you. I'll remember. Perhaps for those reasons I have recently taken to vodka. They tell me its filtration through activated charcoal is a help." Bond, dredging this piece of expertise out of dim recollections of something he had read, was rather proud of having been able to return Goldfinger's powerful serve.

Goldfinger glanced at him sharply. "You seem to understand something of these matters. Have you studied chemistry?"

"Only dabbled in it." It was time to move on. "I was very impressed by that chauffeur of yours. Where did he learn that fantastic combat stuff? Where did it come from? Is that what the Koreans use?"

Goldfinger patted his mouth with his napkin. He snapped his fingers. The two men cleared away the plates and brought roast duckling and a bottle of Mouton Rothschild 1947 for Bond. When they had withdrawn into immobility at each end of the serving-table, Goldfinger said, "Have you ever heard of Karate? No? Well that man is one of the three in the world who have achieved the Black Belt in Karate. Karate is a branch of judo, but it is to judo what a Spandau is to a catapult."

"I could see that."

"The demonstration was an elementary one. Mr Bond—" Goldfinger held up the drumstick he had been gnawing—"I can tell you that if Oddjob had used the appropriate single blow on any one of seven spots on your body, you would now be dead." Goldfinger bit at the side of the drumstick with relish.

Bond said seriously, "That's interesting. I only ~~have~~ five ways of killing Oddjob with one blow."

Goldfinger seemed not to hear the comment. He put down his drumstick and took a deep draught of water. He sat back and spoke while Bond went on eating the excellent food. "Karate, Mr Bond, is based on the theory that the human body possesses five striking surfaces and thirty-seven vulnerable spots—vulnerable, that is, to an expert in Karate whose finger-tips, the side of the hands and the feet are hardened into layers of corn, which is far stronger and more flexible than bone. Every day of his life, Mr Bond, Oddjob spends one hour hitting either sacks of unpolished rice or a strong post whose top is wound many times round with thick rope. He then spends another hour at physical training which is more that of a ballet school than of a gymnasium."

"When does he practise tossing the bowler hat?" Bond had no intention of succumbing to this psychological warfare.

Goldfinger frowned at the interruption. "I have never inquired," he said without humour. "But I think you can take it that Oddjob keeps his eye in at all his skills. However, you were asking where Karate originated. It originated in China where wandering Buddhist priests became an easy prey for footpads and bandits. *Their religion did not allow them to carry weapons, so they developed their own form of unarmed combat.* The inhabitants of Okinawa refined the art to its present form when the Japanese forbade them to carry weapons. They developed the five striking surfaces of the human body—the fist, the edge of the hand, the fingertips, the ball of the foot and the elbows—and toughened them until they were enveloped in layers of corn. There is no follow-through in a Karate blow. The entire body is stiffened at the moment of impact, with the emphasis on the hips, and then instantly relaxed so that balance is never lost. It is astonishing what Oddjob can do. I have seen him hit a brick wall with his entire force and not hurt his hand. He can split three half-inch thick boards, piled one upon the other, with one blow of his hand. You have seen what he can do with his foot."

Bond took a deep draught of the delicious claret. "All this must be rather hard on your furniture."

Goldfinger shrugged. "I have no more use for this house. I thought a demonstration would amuse you. I hope you agree

Oddjob earned his cat." The X-ray eyes blazed briefly
at the table.

Does he train on cats?"

He regards them as a great delicacy. He acquired the
taste during a famine in his country when he was young."
Bond thought it was time to delve rather more deeply.
Why do you need such a man? He can't be very good
company."

"Mr Bond—" Goldfinger snapped his fingers for the two
servants—"it happens that I am a rich man, a very rich
man, and the richer the man the more he needs protection.
The ordinary bodyguard or detective is usually a retired
policeman. Such men are valueless. Their reactions are
slow, their methods old-fashioned, and they are open to
abuse. Moreover, they have a respect for human life.
That is no good if I wish to stay alive. The Koreans have
no such feelings. That is why the Japanese employed them
as guards for their prison camps during the war. They are
the cruellest, most ruthless people in the world. My own
staff are hand picked for these qualities. They have served
me well. I have no complaints. Nor have they. They are
well paid and well fed and housed. When they want women,
street women are brought down from London, well re-
munerated for their services and sent back. The women
are not much to look at, but they are white and that is all the
Koreans ask—to submit the white race to the grossest
indignities. There are sometimes accidents but—" the pale
eyes gazed blankly down the table—"money is an effective
winding-sheet."

Bond smiled.

"You like the aphorism? It is my own."

An excellent cheese soufflé came and was followed by
coffee. They ate in silence, both apparently comfortable
and relaxed by these confidences. Bond certainly was. Gold-
finger, obviously by design, was letting his hair down—
not far, not farther than his shoulders, but he was showing
Bond one of his private faces, presumably the one to which he
thought Bond would respond—the ruthlessly efficient,
cold-blooded tycoon. Perhaps, after all, Bond's spying in the
house, which Goldfinger must at least presume, had revealed
something about Bond that Goldfinger was pleased to know
—that Bond had a crooked side to him, that he wasn't 'a

man' in more than appearance. Now there's no probing and then, with luck, the proposition would be made.

and sat back and lit a cigarette. He said, "That's a beautiful car you've got. Must be about the last of the series. In 1925, wasn't it—two blocks of three cylinders with two plugs for each cylinder, one set fired from the mag. and another from the coil?"

You are correct. But in other respects I have had to introduce some modifications. I have added five leaves to the springs and fitted disc brakes to the rear wheels to increase the braking power. The Servo-operated front-wheel brakes were not sufficient."

"Oh. Why not? The top speed wouldn't be more than fifty. The body can't be all that heavy."

Goldfinger raised his eyebrows. "You think not? One ton of armour plating and armour-plated glass make a big difference."

Bond smiled. "Ah! I see. You certainly do take good care of yourself. But how does that work flying the Channel? Doesn't the car go through the floor of the plane?"

"I take a plane to myself. The Silver City company knows the car. It is a regular routine, twice a year."

"Just touring round Europe?"

"A golfing holiday."

"Great fun. Always wanted to do it myself."

Goldfinger didn't take the bait. "You can afford to now."

Bond smiled. "Oh, that extra ten thousand dollars. But I may need that if I decide to move to Canada."

"You think you could make money there? Do you want to make a lot of money?"

Bond's voice was eager. "Very much. There's no other point in working."

"Unfortunately most ways of making big money take a long time. By the time one has made the money one is too old to enjoy it."

"That's the trouble. I'm always on the lookout for shortcuts. You won't find them here. Taxation's too heavy."

"Quite. And the laws are strict."

"Yes. I found that out."

"Indeed?"

"Got on the fringe of the heroin racket. Only just got

without burning my fingers. Of course this'll go no further?"

Goldfinger shrugged his shoulders. "Mr Bond, someone said that 'law is the crystallized prejudices of the community'. I agree with that definition. It happens to apply most strongly to the traffic in drugs. Even if it didn't, I am not concerned with assisting the police."

"Well, it was like this . . ." Bond launched into the story of the Mexican traffic, swapping roles with Blackwell. He ended up, "I was lucky to get away with it, but it didn't make me particularly popular with Universal Export."

"I daresay not. An interesting story. You seem to have shown resource. You are not tempted to continue in the same line of business?"

Bond shrugged his shoulders. "A bit too tricky. To judge by this Mexican, the big men in the business aren't quite big enough when it comes to the pinch. When things got tough he didn't fight back—except with his mouth."

"Well, Mr Bond," Goldfinger got up from the table and Bond followed suit. "It's been an interesting evening. I don't know that I would go back into heroin. There are safer ways of making big money. You want to be certain that the odds are right and then you should hazard everything. Doubling one's money isn't easy and the chances don't occur frequently. You would like to hear another of my aphorisms?"

"Yes."

"Well, Mr Bond," Goldfinger gave the rich man's thin smile. "The safest way to double your money is fold it twice and put it in your pocket."

Bond, the bank clerk harkening to the bank manager, smiled dutifully but made no comment. This just wasn't good enough. He was getting nowhere. But instinct told him not to put his foot down on the accelerator.

They went back into the hall. Bond held out his hand. "Well, many thanks for the excellent dinner. Time I went and got some sleep. Perhaps we shall run into each other again some day."

Goldfinger pressed Bond's hand briefly and pushed it away from him. It was another mannerism of the millionaire subconsciously afraid of 'the touch'. He looked hard at Bond. He said enigmatically, "I shouldn't be at all surprised, Mr Bond."

On his way across the Isle of Thanet in the moonlight, Bond turned the phrase over and over in his mind. He undressed and got into bed thinking of it, unable to guess its significance. It could mean that Goldfinger intended to get in touch with Bond, or it could mean that Bond must try and keep in touch with Goldfinger. Heads the former, tails the latter. Bond got out of bed and took a coin from the dressing-table and tossed it. It came down tails. So it was up to him to keep close to Goldfinger!

So be it. But his cover would have to be pretty darn good the next time they 'ran into' each other. Bond got back into bed and was instantly asleep.

CHAPTER 12

LONG TAIL ON A GHOST

PUNCTUALLY at nine the next morning Bond got on to the Chief of Staff: "James here. I've had a look at the property. Been all over it. Had dinner last night with the owner. I can say pretty well for certain that the managing director's view is right. Something definitely wrong about the property. Not enough facts to send you a surveyor's report. Owner's going abroad tomorrow, flying from Ferryfield. Wish I knew his departure time. Like to have another sight of his Rolls. Thought I'd make him a present of a portable wireless set. I'll be going over a bit later in the day. Could you get Miss Ponsonby to book me? Destination unknown for the present. I'll be keeping in touch. Anything your end?"

"How did the game of golf go?"

"I won."

There was a chuckle at the other end. "Thought you had. Pretty big stakes, weren't they?"

"How did you know?"

"Had Mr Scotland on last night. Said he'd had a tip on the telephone that someone of your name was in possession of a large amount of undeclared dollars. Had we got such a person and was it true? Chap wasn't very senior and didn't know about Universal. Told him to have a word with the Com-

missioner and we got an apology this morning about the same time as your secretary found an envelope containing ten thousand dollars in your mail! Pretty sly of your man, wasn't it?"

Bond smiled. Typical of Goldfinger to have thought of a way of getting him into trouble over the dollars. Probably made the call to Scotland Yard directly after the game. He had wanted to show Bond that if you gave Goldfinger a knock you'd get at least a thorn in your hand. But the Universal Export cover seemed to have stuck. Bond said, "That's pretty hot! The twister! You might tell the managing director that this time it goes to the White Cross. Can you fix the other things?"

"Of course. Call you back in a few minutes. But watch your step abroad and call us at once if you get bored and need company. So long."

"Bye." Bond put down the receiver. He got up and set about packing his bag. He could see the scene in the Chief of Staff's office as the conversation was played back off the tape while the Chief of Staff translated the call to Miss Money Penny. "Says he agrees that Goldfinger is up to something big but he can't make out what. G. is flying this morning with his Rolls from Ferryfield. 007 wants to follow. (Let's say two hours later to let G. get well away on the other side. Fix the reservation, would you?) He wants us to have a word with Customs so that he can take a good look at the Rolls and plant a Homer in the boot. (Fix that too, please.) He'll keep in touch through stations in case he needs help..."

And so forth. It was an efficient machine. Bond finished packing and, when the London call came giving him his various clearances, he went downstairs, paid his bill and got quickly out of Ramsgate on to the Canterbury road.

London had said that Goldfinger was booked on a special flight leaving at twelve. Bond got to Ferryfield by eleven, made himself known to the Chief Passport Control and the Customs officers who were expecting him, had his car taken out of sight into an empty hangar and sat and smoked and talked minor shop with the passport men. They thought he was from Scotland Yard. He let them go on thinking it. No, he said, Goldfinger was all right. It was possible that one of his servants was trying to smuggle something out of

try. Rather confidential. If Bond could just be left with the car for ten minutes? He wanted to have a look at the tool kit. Would the Customs give the rest of the night to their Grade A going over for hidden compartments? He'd be glad to do so.

At eleven-forty-five one of the Customs men put his foot round the door. He winked at Bond. "Coming in, Monsieur Chauffeur on board. Going to ask both to board the plane before the car. Tell them it's something to do with weight distribution. Not so phoney as it sounds. We'll show this old crate. She's armour-plated. Weighs about three tons. Call you when we're ready." "Thanks." The room emptied. Bond took the fragile parcel out of his pocket. It contained a dry-cell battery required to a small vacuum tube. He ran his eye over the wiring and put the apparatus back in his coat pocket and waited.

At eleven-fifty-five the door opened. The officer beckoned. "No trouble. They're on the plane."

The huge gleaming Silver Ghost stood in the Customs bay out of sight of the plane. The only other car was a dove-grey Triumph TR3 convertible with its hood down. Bond went to the back of the Rolls. The Customs men had unscrewed the plate of the spare tool compartment. Bond pulled out the tray of tools and made a show of minutely examining them and the tray. He knelt down. Under cover of rummaging at the sides of the compartment, he slipped the battery and tube into the back of it. He replaced the tool tray. It fitted all right. He stood up and brushed his hands together. "Negative," he said to the Customs officer.

The officer fitted the plate on and screwed it down with the square key. He stood up and screwed it down with chassis or the bodywork. Plenty of room in the frame and upholstery but we couldn't get at them without doing major job. All right to go?"

"Yes, and thanks." Bond walked back into the office. He heard the quick solid whine of the old self-starter. A minute later, the car came out of the bay and idled super over to the loading ramp. Bond stood at the back of the office and watched it being eased up the ramp. The jaws of the Bristol Freighter clanged shut. The ch were jerked away and the dispatcher raised a thumb.

two engines coughed heavily and fired and the great silver dragonfly trundled off towards the runway.

When the plane was on the runway, Bond walked round to his car and climbed into the driver's seat. He pressed a switch under the dash. There was a moment's silence, then a loud harsh howl came from the hidden loud-speaker. Bond turned a knob. The howl diminished to a deep drone. Bond waited until he heard the Bristol take off. As the plane rose and made for the coast the drone diminished. In five minutes it had gone. Bond tuned the set and picked it up again. He followed it for five minutes as the plane made off across the Channel and then switched the set off. He motored round to the Customs bay, told the AA that he would be back at one-thirty for the two o'clock flight, and drove slowly off towards a pub he knew in Rye. From now on, so long as he kept within about a hundred miles of the Rolls, the Homer, the rough radio transmitter he had slipped into its tool compartment, would keep contact with Bond's receiver. All he had to do was watch the decibels and not allow the noise to fade. It was a simple form of direction finding which allowed one car to put a 'long tail' on another and keep in touch without any danger of being spotted. On the other side of the Channel, Bond would have to discover the road Goldfinger had taken out of Le Touquet, get well within range and close up near big towns or wherever there was a major fork or crossroads. Sometimes Bond would make a wrong decision and have to do some fast motoring to catch up again. The DB III would look after that. It was going to be fun playing hare and hounds across Europe. The sun was shining out of a clear sky. Bond felt a moment's sharp thrill down his spine. He smiled to himself, a hard, cold, cruel smile. Goldfinger, he thought, for the first time in your life you're in trouble—bad trouble.

There is always an *agent cycliste* at the dangerous cross-roads where Le Touquet's quiet N38 meets the oily turbulence of the major N1. Yes, certainly he had seen the Rolls. One could not fail to remark it. A real aristocrat of a car. To the right, monsieur, towards Abbeville. He will be an hour ahead, but with that *bolide* of yours . . .

As soon as Bond had cleared his papers at the airport,

the Homer had picked up the drone of the Rolls. But it was impossible to tell if Goldfinger was heading north—for the Low Countries or Austria or Germany—or if he was off to the south. For that sort of fix you needed two radio cars to get a bearing. Bond raised a hand to the agent and gave his engine the gun. He would have to close up fast. Goldfinger would be through Abbeville and would already have taken the major fork on to N1 for Paris or N28 for Rouen. A lot of time and distance would be wasted if Bond made the wrong guess.

Bond swept along the badly cambered road. He took no chances but covered the forty-three kilometres to Abbeville in a quarter of an hour. The drone of the Homer was loud. Goldfinger couldn't be more than twenty miles ahead. But which way at the fork? On a guess Bond took the Paris road. He beat the car along. For a time there was little change in the voice of the Homer. Bond could be right or wrong. Then, imperceptibly, the drone began to fade. Blast! Turn back or press on fast and take one of the secondary roads across to Rouen and catch up with him there? Bond hated turning back. Ten kilometres short of Beauvais he turned right. For a time it was bad going but then he was on to the fast N30 and could afford to drift into Rouen, led on by the beckoning voice of his pick-up. He stopped on the outskirts of the town and listened with one ear while consulting his Michelin. By the waxing drone he could tell that he had got ahead of Goldfinger. But now there was another vital fork, not quite so easy to retrieve if Bond guessed wrong again. Either Goldfinger would take the Alençon-Le Mans-Tours route to the south, or he meant to move south-east, missing Paris, by way of Evreux, Chartres and Orleans. Bond couldn't afford to get closer to the centre of Rouen and perhaps catch a glimpse of the Rolls and of the way it would take. He would have to wait until the Homer went on the wane and then make his own guess.

It was a quarter of an hour later before Bond could be sure that the Rolls was well past. This time he again took the left leg of the fork. He thrust the pedal into the floor and hurried. Yes. This time the drone was merging into a howl. Bond was on the track. He slowed to forty, tuned down his receiver to a whisper and idled along, wondering where Goldfinger was heading for.

Five o'clock, six, seven. The sun set in Bond's driving mirror and still the Rolls sped on. They were through Dreux and Chartres and on to the long straight fifty-mile stretch into Orleans. If that was to be the night stop the Rolls wouldn't have done badly at all—over two hundred and fifty miles in something over six hours. Goldfinger was certainly no slouch when it came to motoring. He must be keeping the old Silver Ghost at maximum outside the towns. Bond began to close up.

There were rear-lights ahead—dim ones. Bond had his fog lights on. He switched on the Marchals. It was some little sports car. Bond closed up. MG? Triumph? Austin Healey? It was a pale grey Triumph two-seater with the hood up. Bond blinked his lights and swept past. Now there was the glare of another car ahead. Bond dowsed his headlamps and drove on the fogs. The other car was a mile down the road. Bond crept up on it. At a quarter of a mile, he flashed the Marchals on and off for a quick look. Yes, it was the Rolls. Bond dropped back to a mile and stayed there, vaguely noticing the dim lights of the TR₃ in his mirror. On the outskirts of Orleans, Bond pulled into the side of the road. The Triumph growled casually past.

Bond had never cared for Orleans. It was a priest and myth ridden town without charm or gaiety. It was content to live off Joan of Arc and give the visitor a hard, holy glare while it took his money. Bond consulted his Michelin. Goldfinger would stop at five-star hotels and eat fillets of sole and roast chicken. It would be the Arcades for him—perhaps the Moderne. Bond would have liked to stay outside the town and sleep on the banks of the Loire in the excellent Auberge de la Montespan, his belly full of *quenelles de brochet*. He would have to stick closer to his fox. He decided on the Hôtel de la Gare and dinner at the station buffet.

When in doubt, Bond always chose the station hotels. They were adequate, there was plenty of room to park the car and it was better than even chances that the Buffet de la Gare would be excellent. And at the station one could hear the heartbeat of the town. The night-sounds of the trains were full of its tragedy and romance.

The drone on the receiver had stayed constant for ten minutes. Bond noted his way to the three hotels and

slily crept into the town. He went down to the river
ong the lighted *quais*. He had been right. The Rolls
outside the Arcades. Bond turned back into the town and
for the station.

e Hôtel de la Gare was all he had expected—cheap,
fashioned, solidly comfortable. Bond had a hot bath,
t back to his car to make sure the Rolls hadn't moved
walked into the station restaurant and ate one of hi
ourite meals—two *œufs cocotte à la crème*, a large so
nière (Orleans was close enough to the sea. The fish
e Loire are inclined to be muddy) and an adequate Came
ert. He drank a well-iced pint of Rosé d'Anjou and ha
Hennessy's Three Star with his coffee. At ten-thirty he
he restaurant, checked on the Rolls and walked the virtu
streets for an hour. One more check on the Rolls and bed.

At six o'clock the next morning the Rolls hadn't moved.
Bond paid his bill, had a *café complet*—with a double ration of
coffee—at the station, motored down to the *quais* and backed
his car up a side street. This time he could not afford to make
a mistake. Goldfinger would either cross the river and
head south to join N7 for the Riviera, or he would follow
the north bank of the Loire, also perhaps for the Riviera;
but also on the route for Switzerland and Italy. Bond got
out of the car and lounged against the parapet of the river
wall, watching between the trunks of the plane trees. At
eight-thirty, two small figures came out of the Arcades. The
Rolls moved off. Bond watched it follow the *quais* until it
was out of sight, then he got behind the wheel of the Astor
Martin and set off in pursuit.

Bond motored comfortably along the Loire in the earl
summer sunshine. This was one of his favourite corners
the world. In May, with the fruit trees burning white
the soft wide river still big with the winter rains, the va
was green and young and dressed for love. He was thin
this when, before Ch. teau neuf, there was a shrill sc
from twin Bosch horns and the little Triumph tore
The hood was down. There was the blur of a pretty
hidden by white motoring goggles with dark blue l
Although Bond only saw the edge of a profile—a sl
red mouth and the fluttering edge of black hair u
pink handkerchief with white spots, he knew she was
from the way she held her head. There was the a

It had been at Ferryfield, must have taken the flight Goldfinger. It was true he hadn't seen the girl or the registration number, but surely it was the same, for her to be still on Goldfinger's tail after three red miles was more than coincidence. And she had been going with dimmed lights the night before! Here, what's going on?

Bond stepped on the accelerator. He was approachingrovers. He'd anyway have to close up for the next big thing. He would kill two birds with one stone and also see what the girl was up to. If she was keeping station somewhere between him and Goldfinger there would have to be some furious thinking. And it would be a blasted nuisance. It was hard enough keeping up with Goldfinger. With another tail sandwiched between them, it would become hellish difficult.

She was still there, perhaps two miles behind the Rolls, keeping well back. As soon as he caught sight of her little glittering rump (as he described it to himself) Bond slowed. Well, well! Who *was* she? What the hell was all this about? Bond motored on, his face morose and thoughtful.

The little convoy kept on, still following the wide black sheen of N7 that runs like a thick, dangerous nerve down through the heart of France. But at Moulins Bond nearly lost the scent. He had to double back quickly and get on to N73. Goldfinger had turned at right angles and was now making for Lyons and Italy, or for Mâcon and Geneva. Bond had to do some fast motoring, and then was only just in time to avoid running into trouble. He had counted on much about the pitch of the Homer. He had counted on sight of the drone was becoming a howl. If he hadn't braked hard down from the ninety he was doing, he would have been on top of the Rolls. As it was, he was barely creeping along when he came over a rise and saw the big yellow car stopped by the wayside a mile ahead. There was a black cart-track. Bond swerved into it and stopped under cover of a low hedge. He took a small pair of binoculars out of his glove compartment, got out of the car and walked. Yes, damn it! Goldfinger was sitting below a small bridge on the bank of a stream. He was wearing a white dust coat and a white linen driving helmet in the style of German to

He was eating, having a picnic. The sight made Bond hungry. What about his own lunch? He examined the Rolls. Through the rear window he could see part of the Korean's black shape in the front seat. There was no sign of the Triumph. If the girl had still been on Goldfinger's tail she would have had no warning. She would have just kept her head down and stepped on the gas. Now she would be somewhere ahead, waiting in ambush for the Rolls to come by. Or would she? Perhaps Bond's imagination had run away with him. She was probably on her way to the Italian lakes to join an aunt, some friends, a lover.

Now Goldfinger was on his feet. Tidy man. That's right, pick up the scraps of paper and tuck them away carefully under the bridge. Why not throw them in the stream? Suddenly Bond's jaws tightened. What did those actions of Goldfinger remind him of? Was Bond romancing again, or was the bridge a post box? Had Goldfinger been instructed to leave something, one of his bars of gold, under this particular bridge? France, Switzerland, Italy. It was convenient for all of them—the Communist cell in Lyons for instance, one of the strongest in France. And this was a good place to use with a clear field of view up and down the road.

Goldfinger scrambled up the bank. Bond drew back under cover. He heard the distant grind of the old self-starter. He cautiously watched the Rolls until it had disappeared.

It was a pretty bridge over a pretty stream. It had a survey number set in the arch—79/6—the sixth bridge from some town on N79. Easy to find. Bond got quickly out of the car and slid down the shallow bank. It was dark and cool under the arch. There were the shadows of fish in the slow, clear, pebbled water. Bond searched the edge of the masonry near the grass verge. Exactly in the centre, below the road, there was a patch of thick grass against the wall. Bond parted the grass. There was a sprinkling of freshly turned earth. Bond dug with his fingers.

There was only one. It was smooth to the touch and brick-shaped. It needed some strength to lift it. Bond brushed the earth off the dull yellow metal and wrapped the heavy bar in his handkerchief. He held the bar under his coat and climbed back up the bank on to the empty road.

"IF YOU TOUCH ME THERE . . ."

BOND FELT pleased with himself. A whole lot of people were going to get very angry with Goldfinger. You do a lot of dirty work with twenty thousand pounds. Now plans would have to be altered, conspiracies postponed, perhaps even lives saved. And, if it ever got to an inquiry by CERSH, which was unlikely as they were the sort of realistic people who cut their losses, it could only be assumed that some sheltering tramp had found the gold bar.

Bond lifted the secret flap under the passenger seat and slipped the bar inside. Dangerous stuff. He would have to contact the next station of the Service and hand it over to them. They would get it back to London in the Embassy bag. Bond would have to report this quickly. It confirmed a lot. M might even want to warn the Deuxième and have the bridge watched to see who came. But Bond hoped that would not happen. He didn't want a scare started just when he was getting close to Goldfinger. He wanted the skies over Goldfinger to be blue and clear.

Bond got moving. Now there were other things to think about. He must catch up with the Rolls before Mâcon and get the next fork, to Geneva or Lyons, right. He must solve the problem of the girl and if possible get her off the road. Pretty or not, she was confusing the issue. And he must stop and buy himself something to eat and drink. It was on o'clock and the sight of Goldfinger eating had made him hungry. And it was time to fill up and check the water and oil.

The drone of the Homer grew louder. He was in the outskirts of Mâcon. He must close up and take the risk being spotted. The busy traffic would hide his low-slung car. It was vital to know if the Rolls crossed the Saône for the Bourg road or if it turned right at the bridge joined the N6 for Lyons. Far down the Rue Rambuteau there was a glimpse of yellow. Over the railway bridge through the little square. The high yellow box kept towards the river. Bond watched the passers-by turn heads to follow the gleaming Rolls. The river.

Goldfinger turn right or keep on across the bridge? The Rolls kept straight on. So it was Switzerland! Bond followed over into the suburb of St Laurent. Now for a butcher and a baker and a wine shop. A hundred yards ahead the golden head of a calf hung over the pavement. Bond glanced in his driving mirror. Well, well! The little Triumph was only feet away from his tail. How long had she been there? Bond had been so intent on following the Rolls that he hadn't glanced back since entering the town. She must have been hiding up a side street. So! Now coincidence was certainly out. Something must be done. Sorry, sweetheart. I've got to mess you up. I'll be as gentle as I can. Hold tight. Bond stopped abruptly in front of the butcher's shop. He banged the gears into reverse. There was a sickening scrunch and tinkle. Bond switched off his engine and got out.

He walked round to the back of the car. The girl, her face tense with anger, had one beautiful silken leg on the road. There was an indiscreet glimpse of white thigh. The girl stripped off her goggles and stood, legs braced and arms akimbo. The beautiful mouth was taut with anger.

The Aston Martin's rear bumper was locked into the wreckage of the Triumph's lamps and radiator grille. Bond said amiably, "If you touch me there again you'll have to marry me."

The words were hardly out of his mouth before the open palm cracked across his face. Bond put up a hand and rubbed his cheek. Now there was quite a crowd. There was a murmur of approval and ribaldry. "Allez y la gossel Maintenant le knock-out!"

The girl's rage had not dissipated with the blow. "You bloody fool! What the hell do you think you're doing?"

Bond thought: If only pretty girls were always angry they would be beautiful. He said, "Your brakes can't be up to much."

"My brakes! What the hell do you mean? You reversed into me."

"Gears slipped. I didn't know you were so close." It was time to calm her down. "I'm most frightfully sorry. I'll pay for all the repairs and everything. It really is bad luck. Let's see what the damage is. Try and back away. Doesn't look as if our bumpers have over-ridden." Bond put a foot on the Triumph's bumpers and rocked.

"Don't you dare touch my car! Leave it alone." Angrily the girl climbed back into the driver's seat. She pressed the self-starter. The engine fired. Metal clanged under the bonnet. She switched off and leant out. "There you are, you idiot! You've smashed the fan."

Bond had hoped he had. He got into his own car and eased it away from the Triumph. Bits of the Triumph, released by Bond's bumper, tinkled on to the road. He got out again. The crowd had thinned. There was a man in a mechanic's overalls. He volunteered to call a breakdown van and went off to do so. Bond walked over to the Triumph. The girl had got out and was waiting for him. Her expression had changed. Now she was more composed. Bond noticed that her eyes, which were dark blue, watched his face carefully.

Bond said, "It really won't be too bad. Probably knocked the fan out of alignment. They'll put temporary headlamps in the sockets and straighten up the chrome. You'll be off again by tomorrow morning. Now," Bond reached into his pocket for his notecase, "this is maddening for you and I'll certainly take all the blame. Here's a hundred thousand francs to cover the damage and your expenses for the night and telephoning your friends and so on. Please take it and call it quits. I'd love to stay here and see you get on the road all right tomorrow morning. But I've got an appointment this evening and I've simply got to make it."

"No." The one word was cool, definite. The girl put her hands behind her back and waited.

"But . . ." What was it she wanted, the police? Have him charged with dangerous driving?

"I've got an appointment this evening too. I've got to make it. I've got to get to Geneva. Will you please take me there? It's not far. Only about a hundred miles. We could do it in two hours in that." She gestured at the DB III. "Will you? Please?"

There was a desperate urgency in the voice. No cajolery, no threats, only a blazing need.

For the first time Bond examined her as more than a pretty girl who perhaps—they were the only explanations Bond had found to fit the facts—wanted to be picked up by Goldfinger or had a blackmail on him. But she didn't look capable of either of these things. There was too much

character in the face, too much candour. And she wasn't wearing the uniform of a seductress. She wore a white, rather masculine cut, heavy silk shirt. It was open at the neck, but it would button up to a narrow military collar. The shirt had long wide sleeves gathered at the wrists. The girl's nails were unpainted and her only piece of jewellery was a gold ring on her engagement finger (true or false?). She wore a very wide black stitched leather belt with double brass buckles. It rose at the back to give some of the support of a racing driver's corset belt. Her short skirt was charcoal-grey and pleated. Her shoes were expensive-looking black sandals which would be comfortable and cool for driving. The only touch of colour was the pink handkerchief which she had taken off her head and now held by her side with the white goggles. It all looked very attractive. But the get-up reminded Bond more of an equipment than a young girl's dress. There was something faintly mannish and open-air about the whole of her behaviour and appearance. She might, thought Bond, be a member of the English women's ski team, or spend a lot of her time in England hunting or show-jumping.

Although she was a very beautiful girl she was the kind who leaves her beauty alone. She had made no attempt to pat her hair into place. As a result, it looked as a girl's hair should look—untidy, with bits that strayed and a rather crooked parting. It provided the contrast of an uneven, jagged dark frame for the pale symmetry of the face, the main features of which were blue eyes under dark brows, a desirable mouth, and an air of determination and independence that came from the high cheek-bones and the fine line of the jaw. There was the same air of self-reliance in her figure. She held her body proudly—her fine breasts out-thrown and unashamed under the taut silk. Her stance, with feet slightly parted and hands behind her back, was a mixture of provocation and challenge.

The whole picture seemed to say, "Now then, you handsome bastard, don't think you can 'little woman' me. You've got me into this mess and, by God, you're going to get me out! You may be attractive, but I've got my life to run, and I know where I'm going."

Bond weighed her request. How much of a nuisance would she be? How soon could he get rid of her and get on

business? Was there any security risk? Against the stages, there was his curiosity about her and what up to, the memory of the fable he had spun round which had now taken its first step towards realization, finally, the damsel-in-distress business—any woman's for help.

and said curtly, "I'll be glad to take you to Geneva. Then," he opened up the back of the Aston Martin, "get your things in. While I fix up about the garage's some money. Please buy us lunch—anything you like yourself. For me, six inches of Lyon sausage, a loaf of bread, butter, and half a litre of Mâcon with the cork pulled." Their eyes met and exchanged a flurry of masculine/minine master/slave signals. The girl took the money. Thank you. I'll get the same things for myself." She went to the boot of the Triumph and unlocked it. "No, don't bother. I can manage these." She hauled out a bag of golf clubs with the cover zipped shut and a small, expensive looking suitcase. She brought them over to the Aston Martin and, rejecting Bond's offer of help, fitted them in alongside Bond's suitcase. She watched him lock the back of the car and went back to the Triumph. She took out a wide, black-stitched leather shoulder bag.

Bond said, "What name and address shall I give?" "What?"

Bond repeated his question, wondering if she would lie about the name or the address, or both.

She said, "I shall be moving about. Better say the Bergues at Geneva. The name's Soames. Miss Tilly Soames." There was no hesitation. She went into the butcher's shop.

A quarter of an hour later they were on their way. The girl sat upright and kept her eyes on the road. T drone on the Homer was faint. The Rolls must have gained fifty miles. Bond hurried. They flashed through B and over the river at Pont d'Ain. Now they were in foothills of the Jura and there were the S-bends of Bond went at them as if he was competing in the A Trials. After the girl had swayed against him twice kept her hand on the handle on the dash and rode the car as if she were his spare driver. Once, after particularly sharp dry skid that almost took them over side, Bond glanced at her profile. Her lips were par

her nostrils slightly flared. The eyes were alight. She was enjoying herself.

They came to the top of the pass and there was the run down towards the Swiss frontier. Now the Homer was sending out a steady howl. Bond thought, I must take it easy or we shall be running into them at the Customs. He put his hand under the dash and tuned the noise down. He pulled in to the side of the road. They sat in the car and ate a polite but almost silent picnic, neither making any attempt at conversation, both, it seemed, with other things on their minds. After ten minutes, Bond got going again. He sat relaxed, motoring easily down the curving road through the young whispering pines.

The girl said, "What's that noise?"

"Magneto whine. Gets worse when I hurry. Started at Orleans. Have to get it fixed tonight."

She seemed satisfied with this mumbo-jumbo. She said diffidently, "Where are you heading for? I hope I haven't taken you very far out of your way."

Bond said in a friendly voice, "Not at all. As a matter of fact, I'm going to Geneva too. But I may not stop there tonight. May have to get on. Depends on my meeting. How long will you be there?"

"I don't know. I'm playing golf. There's the Swiss Women's Open Championship at Divonne. I'm not really that class, but I thought it would be good for me to try. Then I was going to play on some of the other courses."

Fair enough. No reason why it shouldn't be true. But Bond was certain it wasn't the whole truth. He said, "Do you play a lot of golf? What's your home course?"

"Quite a lot. Temple."

It had been an obvious question. Was the answer true, or just the first golf course she had thought of? "Do you live near there?"

"I've got an aunt who lives at Henley. What are you doing in Switzerland. Holiday?"

"Business. Import and Export."

"Oh."

Bond smiled to himself. It was a stage conversation. The voices were polite stage voices. He could see the scene, beloved of the English theatre—the drawing-room, sunshine on hollyhocks outside french windows, the couple sitting

sofa, on the edge of it, she pouring out the tea. "Do
sugar?"

came out into the foothills. There was a long straight
of road and in the distance the small group of build-
of the French Customs.

the girl gave him no chance to get a glimpse of her
port. As soon as the car stopped she said something
ut tidying up and disappeared into the 'Dames'. Bond
gone through the Controle and was dealing with the
ptyque when she reappeared, her passport stamped. At
e Swiss Customs she chose the excuse of getting some-
hing out of her suitcase. Bond hadn't got time to hang
out and call her bluff.

Bond hurried on into Geneva and pulled up at the im-
posing entrance of the Bergues. The *baggage* took her
suitcase and golf clubs. They stood together on the steps.
She held out her hand. "Goodbye." There was no melting
of the candid blue eyes. "And thank you. You drive beauti-
fully." Her mouth smiled. "I'm surprised you got into the
wrong gear at Mâcon."

Bond shrugged. "It doesn't often happen. I'm glad I did.
If I can get my business finished, perhaps we could meet
again."

"That would be nice." The tone of voice said it wouldn't
be. The girl turned and went in through the swingdoors.
Bond ran down to his car. To hell with her! Now to
pick up Goldfinger. Then to the little office on the Qua
Wilson. He tuned the Homer and waited a couple of minutes
following the right or the left bank of the lake. From the
pitch of the Homer, he was at least a mile outside the town.
Which way? To the left towards Lausanne? To the right
towards Evian? The DB III was already on the left-hand
road. Bond decided to follow its nose. He got moving.

Bond caught up with the high yellow silhouette
before Coppet, the tiny lakeside hamlet made famous
Madame de Staël. He hid behind a lorry. At his ne
connaissance the Rolls had disappeared. Bond motor
watching to the left. At the entrance to the village, bi
iron gates were closing in a high wall. Dust hung in
Above the wall was a modest placard. It said, in faded
on blue, ENTREPRISES AURIC A.G. The fox had gone

Bond went on until he found a turning to the left. He followed this until there was a lane which led back through the vineyards to the woods behind Coppet and to the château of Madame de Staël. Bond stopped among the trees. Now he should be directly above the Entreprises Auric. He took his binoculars, got out and followed a foot-path down towards the village. Soon, on his right, was a spiked iron railing. There was rolled barbed wire along its top. A hundred yards lower down the hill the railing merged into a high stone wall. Bond walked slowly back up the path looking for the secret entrance the children of Coppet would have made to get at the chestnut trees. He found it—two bars of the railing widened to allow a small body through. Bond stood on the lower railing with all his weight, widened the gap by another couple of inches and wormed his way through.

Bond walked warily through the trees, watching each step for dead branches. The trees thinned. There were glimpses of a huddle of low buildings behind a small *manoir*. Bond picked the thick trunk of a fir tree and got behind it. Now he was looking down on the buildings. The nearest was about a hundred yards away. There was an open courtyard. In the middle of the courtyard stood the dusty Silver Ghost.

Bond took out the binoculars and examined everything minutely.

The house was a well-proportioned square block of old red brick with a slate roof. It consisted of two storeys and an attic floor. It would probably contain four bedrooms and two principal rooms. The walls were partly covered by a very old wistaria in full bloom. It was an attractive house. In his mind's eye Bond could see the white-painted panelling inside. He smelled the sweet musty sunshiny smell of the rooms. The back door gave on to the wide paved courtyard in which stood the Rolls. The courtyard was open on Bond's side but closed on the other two sides by single-storey corrugated iron workshops. A tall zinc chimney rose from the angle of the two workshops. The chimney was topped by a zinc cowl. On top of the zinc cowl was the revolving square mouth of what looked to Bond like a Decca radar scanner you see on the bridges of most ships. The apparatus whirled steadily round. Bond couldn't imagine what purpose it served on the roof of this little factory among the trees.

denly the silence and immobility of the peaceful
were broken. It was as if Bond had put a penny in
slot of a diorama on Brighton pier. Somewhere a tinny
struck five. At the signal, the back door of the house
ned and Goldfinger came out, still dressed in his white
n motoring coat, but without the helmet. He was fol-
wed by a nondescript, obsequious little man with a tooth-
ash moustache and horn-rimmed spectacles. Goldfinger
oked pleased. He went up to the Rolls and patted its bonnet.
he other man laughed politely. He took a whistle out of his
waistcoat pocket and blew it. A door in the right-hand
workshop opened and four workmen in blue overalls filed
out and walked over to the car. From the open door they
had left there came a whirring noise and a heavy engine
started up and settled into the rhythmic pant Bond remembered
from Reculver.

The four men disposed themselves round the car. At a
word from the little man, who was presumably the fore-
man, they began to take the car to pieces.

By the time they had lifted the four doors off their hinges,
removed the bonnet cover from the engine and had set
about the rivets on one of the mudguards, it was clear that
they were methodically stripping the car of its armour
plating.

Almost as soon as Bond had come to this conclusion, the
black, bowler-hatted figure of Oddjob appeared at the
back door of the house and made some sort of a noise at
Goldfinger. With a word to the foreman, Goldfinger went
indoors and left the workmen to it.

It was time for Bond to get going. He took a last care-
look round to fix the geography in his mind and edged
back among the trees.

"I am from Universal Export."
"Oh yes?" Behind the desk there was a reproduction
the Annigoni portrait of the Queen. On the other
were advertisements for Ferguson tractors and other
cultural machinery. From outside the wide window came
hum of traffic along the Quai Wilson. A steamer had
Bond glanced out of the window and watched it ride
the middle distance. It left an enchanted wake across
flawless evening mirror of the lake. Bond looked back

the politely inquiring eyes in the bland, neutral, business-man's face.

"We were hoping to do business with you."

"What sort of business?"

"Important business."

The man's face broke into a smile. He said cheerfully, "It's 007, isn't it? Thought I recognized you. Well now, what can I do for you?" The voice became cautious. "Only one thing, better make it quick and get along. There's been the hell of a heat on since the Dumont business. They've got me taped—the locals and Redland. All very peaceful of course, but you won't want them sniffing round you."

"I thought it might be like that. It's only routine. Here." Bond unbuttoned his shirt and took out the heavy chunk of gold. "Get that back, would you? And transmit this when you have a chance." The man pulled a pad towards him and wrote in shorthand to Bond's dictation.

When the man had finished he put the pad in his pocket. "Well, well! Pretty hot stuff. Wilco. My routine's at midnight. This"—he indicated the gold—"can go to Berne for the bag. Anything else?"

"Ever heard of the 'Entreprises Auric' at Coppet? Know what they do?"

"I know what every engineering business in the area does. Have to. Tried to sell them some hand riveters last year. They make metal furniture. Pretty good stuff. The Swiss railways take some of it, and the airlines."

"Know which airlines?"

The man shrugged. "I heard they did all the work for Mecca, the big charter line to India. Their terminus is Geneva. They're quite a big competitor with All-India. Mecca's privately owned. Matter of fact, I did hear that Auric & Co. had some money in it. No wonder they've got the contract for the seating.

A slow, grim smile spread across Bond's face. He got up and held out his hand. "You don't know it, but you've just done a whole jigsaw puzzle in under a minute. Many thanks. Best of luck with the tractor business. Hope we'll meet again one day."

Out in the street, Bond got quickly into his car and drove along the *quai* to the Bergues. So that was the picture! For two days he'd been trailing a Silver Ghost across Europe.

armour-plated Silver Ghost. He'd watched the last
being riveted on in Kent, and the whole lot
ripped off at Copper. Those sheets would already be
urnaces at Copper, ready to be modelled into seventy
for a Mecca Constellation. In a few days' time those
would be stripped off the plane in India and replaced
aluminium ones. And Goldfinger would have made
? Half a million pounds? A million?
r the Silver Ghost wasn't silver at all. It was a Golden
st—all the two tons of its bodywork. Solid, eighteen-
t, white gold.

CHAPTER 14

THINGS THAT GO THUMP IN THE NIGHT

JAMES BOND booked in at the Hôtel des Bergues, took
a bath and shower and changed his clothes. He weighed
the Walther PPK in his hand and wondered whether he
should take it or leave it behind. He decided to leave it.
He had no intention of being seen when he went back to the
entreprises Auric. If, by dreadful luck, he was seen, it would
poil everything to get into a fight. He had his story, a poor
one, but at least one that would not break his cover. He
would have to rely on that. But Bond did choose a particular
pair of shoes that were rather heavier than one could expect
from their casual build.

At the desk he asked if Miss Soames was in. He was no
surprised when the receptionist said they had no Mi
Soames staying in the hotel. The only question was whether
she had left the hotel when Bond was out of sight or had
registered under another name.

Bond motored across the beautiful Pont du Mont Blanc
and along the brightly lit *quai* to the Bavaria, a most
Alsatian brasserie that had been the rendezvous of
great in the days of the League of Nations. He sat by
window and drank Enzian washed down with pale Lö
brau. He thought first about Goldfinger. There was
no doubt what he was up to. He financed a spy net

probably SMERSH, and he made fortunes smuggling gold to India, the country where he could get the biggest premium. After the loss of his Brixham trawler, he had thought out this new way. He first made it known that he had an armoured car. That would only be considered eccentric. Many English bodybuilders exported them. They used to go to Indian rajahs; now they went to oil sheiks and South American presidents. Goldfinger had chosen a Silver Ghost because, with his modifications, the chassis was strong enough, the riveting was already a feature of the bodywork, and there was the largest possible area of metal sheeting. Perhaps Goldfinger had run it abroad once or twice to get Ferryfield used to it. Then, on the next trip, he took off the armour plating in his works at Reculver. He substituted eighteen-carat white gold. Its alloy of nickel and silver would be strong enough. The colour of the metal would not betray him if he got in a smash or if the bodywork were scratched. Then off to Switzerland and to the little factory. The workmen would have been as carefully picked as the ones at Reculver. They would take off the plates and mould them into aircraft seats which would then be upholstered and installed in Mecca Airlines—run presumably by some stooge of Goldfinger's who got a cut on each 'gold run'. On these runs—once, twice, three times a year?—the plane would accept only light freight and a few passengers. At Bombay or Calcutta the plane would need an overhaul, be re-equipped. It would go to the Mecca hangar and have new seats fitted. The old ones, the gold ones, would go to the bullion brokers. Goldfinger would get his sterling credit in Nassau or wherever he chose. He would have made his hundred, or two hundred, per cent profit and could start the cycle all over again, from the 'We Buy Old Gold' shops in Britain to Reculver—Geneva—Bombay.

Yes, thought Bond, gazing out across the glistening, starlit lake, that's how it would be—a top-notch smuggling circuit with a minimum risk and maximum profit. How Goldfinger must smile as he pressed the bulb of the old boa-constrictor horn and swept past the admiring policemen of three countries! He certainly seemed to have the answer—the philosopher's stone, the finger of gold! If he hadn't been such an unpleasant man, if he wasn't doing all this to sustain the trigger finger of SMERSH, Bond

would have felt admiration for this monumental trickster whose operations were so big that they worried even the Bank of England. As it was, Bond only wanted to destroy Goldfinger, seize his gold, get him behind bars. Goldfinger's gold-lust was too strong, too ruthless, too dangerous to be allowed the run of the world.

It was eight o'clock. The Enzian, the firewater distilled from gentian that is responsible for Switzerland's chronic alcoholism, was beginning to warm Bond's stomach and melt his tensions. He ordered another double and with it a choucroute and a carafe of Fondant.

And what about the girl, this pretty, authoritarian joker that had suddenly been faced in the deal? What in hell was she about? What about this golf story? Bond got up and went to the telephone booth at the back of the room. He got on to the *Journal de Genève* and through to the sports editor. The man was helpful, but surprised at Bond's question. No. The various championships were of course played in the summer when the other national programmes were finished and it was possible to lure a good foreign entry to Switzerland. It was the same with all other European countries. They liked to bring in as many British and American players as possible. It increased the gates. "Pas de quoi, monsieur."

Bond went back to his table and ate his dinner. So much for that. Whoever she was, she was an amateur. No professional would use a cover that could be broken down by one telephone call. It had been in the back of Bond's mind—reluctantly, because he liked the girl and was excited by her—that she could, she just could have been an agent of SMERSH sent to keep an eye on Goldfinger, or Bond or both. She had some of the qualities of a secret agent, the independence, the strength of character, the ability to walk alone. But that idea was out. She hadn't got the training.

Bond ordered a slice of gruyère, pumpernickel and coffee. No, she was an enigma. Bond only prayed that she hadn't got some private plot involving either him or Goldfinger that was going to mess up his own operation.

And his own job was so nearly finished! All he needed was the evidence of his own eyes that the story he had woven round Goldfinger and the Rolls was the truth. One look into the works at Coppet—one grain of white gold dust—and he could be off to Berne that very night and be

on to the duty officer over the Embassy scrambler. Then, quietly, discreetly, the Bank of England would freeze Goldfinger's accounts all over the world and perhaps, already tomorrow, the Special Branch of the Swiss police would be knocking on the door of Entreprises Auric. Extradition would follow, Goldfinger would go to Brixton, there would be a quiet, rather complicated case in one of the smuggling courts like Maidstone or Lewes. Goldfinger would get a few years, his naturalization would be revoked and his gold hoard, illegally exported, would trickle back into the vaults below the Bank of England. And SMERSH would gnash its blood-stained teeth and add another page to Bond's bulging zapiska.

Time to go for the last lap. Bond paid his bill and went out and got into his car. He crossed the Rhône and motored slowly along the glittering *quai* through the evening traffic. It was an average night for his purpose. There was a blazing three-quarter moon to see by, but not a breath of wind to hide his approach through the woods to the factory. Well, there was no hurry. They would probably be working through the night. He would have to take it very easily and carefully. The geography of the place and the route he had plotted for himself ran before Bond's eyes like a film while the automatic pilot that is in all good drivers took the car along the wide white highway beside the sleeping lake.

Bond followed his route of the afternoon. When he had turned off the main road he drove on his sidelights. He nosed the car off the lane into a clearing in the woods and switched off the engine. He sat and listened. In the heavy silence there was only a soft ticking from the hot metal under the bonnet and the hasty trip of the dashboard clock. Bond got out, eased the door shut and walked softly down the little path through the trees.

Now he could hear the soft heavy pant of the generator engine . . . thumpah . . . thumpah . . . thumpah. It seemed a watchful, rather threatening noise. Bond reached the gap in the iron bars, slipped through and stood, straining his senses forward through the moon-dappled trees.

THUMPAH . . . THUMPAH . . . THUMPAH. The great iron puffs were on top of him, inside his brain. Bond felt the skin-crawling tickle at the groin that dates from one's first game of hide and seek in the dark. He smiled to himself at the

animal danger signal. What primeval chord had been struck by this innocent engine's noise coming out of the tall zinc chimney? The breath of a dinosaur in its cave? Bond tightened his muscles and crept forward foot by foot, moving small branches carefully out of his way, placing each step as cautiously as if he was going through a minefield.

The trees were thinning. Soon he would be up with the big sheltering trunk he had used before. He looked for it and then stood frozen, his pulse racing. Below the trunk of his tree, spreadeagled on the ground, was a body.

Bond opened his mouth wide and breathed slowly in and out to release the tension. Softly he wiped his sweating palms down his trousers. He dropped slowly to his hands and knees and stared forward, his eyes widened like camera lenses.

The body under the tree moved, shifted cautiously to a new position. A breath of wind whispered in the tops of the trees. The moonbeams danced quickly across the body and then were still. There was a glimpse of thick black hair, black sweater, narrow black slacks. And something else—a straight gleam of metal along the ground. It began beneath the clump of black hair and ran past the trunk of the trees into the grass.

Bond slowly, wearily bent his head and looked at the ground between his spread hands. It was the girl, Tilly. She was watching the buildings below. She had a rifle—a rifle that must have been among the innocent golf clubs—ready to fire on them. Damn and blast the silly bitch!

Bond slowly relaxed. It didn't matter who she was or what she was up to. He measured the distance, planned each stride—the trajectory of the final spring, left hand to her neck, right to the gun. Now!

Bond's chest skidded over the hump of the buttocks and thudded into the small of the girl's back. The impact emptied the breath out of her with a soft grunt. The fingers of Bond's left hand flew to the throat and found the carotid artery. His right hand was on the waist of the rifle's stock. He prised the fingers away, felt that the safety catch was on and reached the rifle far to one side.

Bond eased the weight of his chest off the girl's back and moved his fingers away from her neck. He closed them softly over her mouth. Beneath him, he felt the body heave,

the lungs labouring for breath. She was still out. Carefully Bond gathered the two hands behind the girl's back and held them with his right. Beneath him the buttocks began to squirm. The legs jerked. Bond pinned the legs to the ground with his stomach and thighs, noting the strong muscles bunched under him. Now the breath was rasping through his fingers. Teeth gnawed at his hand. Bond inched carefully forwards along the girl. He got his mouth through her hair to her ear. He whispered urgently, "Tilly, for Christ's sake. Stay still! This is me, Bond. I'm a friend. This is vital. Something you don't know about. Will you stay still and listen?"

The teeth stopped reaching for his fingers. The body relaxed and lay soft under his. After a time, the head nodded once.

Bond slid off her. He lay beside her, still holding her hands prisoned behind her back. He whispered, "Get your breath. But tell me, were you after Goldfinger?"

The pale face glanced sideways and away. The girl whispered fiercely into the ground, "I was going to kill him."

Some girl Goldfinger had put in the family way. Bond let go her hands. She brought them up and rested her head on them. Her whole body shuddered with exhaustion and released nerves. The shoulders began to shake softly. Bond reached out a hand and smoothed her hair, quietly, rhythmically. His eyes carefully went over the peaceful, unchanged scene below. Unchanged? There was something. The radar thing on the cowl of the chimney. It wasn't going round any more. It had stopped with its oblong mouth pointing in their direction. The fact had no significance for Bond. Now the girl wasn't crying any more. Bond nuzzled his mouth close to her ear. Her hair smelled of jasmine. He whispered, "Don't worry. I'm after him too. And I'm going to damage him far worse than you could have done. I've been sent after him by London. They want him. What did he do to you?"

She whispered, almost to herself, "He killed my sister. You knew her—Jill Masterton."

Bond said fiercely, "What happened?"

"He has a woman once a month. Jill told me this when she first took the job. He hypnotizes them. Then he—he paints them gold."

"Christ! Why?"

don't know. Jill told me he's mad about gold. I suppose
part of thinks he's—that he's sort of possessing gold.
know—marrying it. He gets some Korean servant to
them. The man has to leave their backbones unpainted.
couldn't explain that. I found out it's so they wouldn't
If their bodies were completely covered with gold paint,
pores of the skin wouldn't be able to breathe. Then they'd
Afterwards, they're washed down by the Korean with
n or something. Goldfinger gives them a thousand dollars.
I sends them away."

Bond saw the dreadful Oddjob with his pot of gold
ant, Goldfinger's eyes gloating over the glistening statue,
e fierce possession. "What happened to Jill?"
"She cabled me to come. She was in an emergency ward
a hospital in Miami. Goldfinger had thrown her out.
he was dying. The doctors didn't know what was the
matter. She told me what had happened to her—what he
had done to her. She died the same night." The girl's voice
was dry—matter of fact. "When I got back to England I
went to Train, the skin specialist. He told me this business
about the pores of the skin. It had happened to some cabaret
girl who had to pose as a silver statue. He showed me details
of the case and the autopsy. Then I knew what had happened
to Jill. Goldfinger had had her painted all over. He had
murdered her. It must have been out of revenge for—for
going with you." There was a pause. The girl said dully,
"She told me about you. She—she liked you. She told me if
ever I met you I was to give you this ring."

Bond closed his eyes tight, fighting with a wave of mental
nausea. More death! More blood on his hands. This time,
as the result of a careless gesture, a piece of bravado that had
led to twenty-four hours of ecstasy with a beautiful girl who
had taken his fancy and, in the end, rather more than his
fancy. And this petty sideswipe at Goldfinger's ego had been
returned by Goldfinger a thousand, a millionfold. "She left
my employ"—the flat words in the sunshine at Sandwich two
days before. How Goldfinger must have enjoyed saying that!
Bond's fingernails dug into the palms of his hands. By God,
he'd pin this murder on Goldfinger if it was the last act of his
life. As for himself . . . ? Bond knew the answer. This death he
would not be able to excuse as being part of his job. This
death he would have to live with.

The girl was pulling at her finger—at the Claddagh ring, the entwined hands round the gold heart. She put her knuckle to her mouth. The ring came off. She held it up for Bond to take. The tiny gold circle, silhouetted against the trunk of the tree, glittered in the moonlight.

The noise in Bond's ear was something between a hiss and a shrill whistle. There was a dry, twanging thud. The aluminium feathers of the steel arrow trembled like a humming bird's wings in front of Bond's eyes. The shaft of the arrow straightened. The gold ring tinkled down the shaft until it reached the bark of the tree.

Slowly, almost incuriously, Bond turned his head.

Ten yards away—half in moonlight, half in shadow—the black melon-headed figure crouched, its legs widely straddled in the judo stance. The left arm, thrust forward against the glinting semicircle of the bow, was straight as a duellist's. The right hand, holding the feathers of the second arrow, was rigid against the right cheek. Behind the head, the taut right elbow lanced back in frozen suspense. The silver tip of the second arrow pointed exactly between the two pale raised profiles.

Bond breathed the words, "Don't move an inch." Aloud he said, "Hullo, Oddjob. Damned good shot."

Oddjob jerked the tip of the arrow upwards.

Bond got to his feet, shielding the girl. He said softly out of the corner of his mouth, "He mustn't see the rifle." He said to Oddjob, speaking casually, peaceably, "Nice place Mr Goldfinger has here. Want to have a word with him sometime. Perhaps it's a bit late tonight. You might tell him I'll be along tomorrow." Bond said to the girl, "Come on, darling. We've had our walk in the woods. Time to get back to the hotel." He took a step away from Oddjob towards the fence.

Oddjob stamped his forward foot. The point of the second arrow swung to the centre of Bond's stomach.

"Oargn." Oddjob jerked his head sideways and downwards towards the house.

"Oh, you think he'd like to see us now? All right. You don't think we'll be disturbing him? Come on, darling." Bond led the way to the left of the tree, away from the rifle that lay in the shadowed grass.

As they went slowly down the hill, Bond talked softly

to the girl, briefing her. "You're my girl friend. I brought you out from England. Seem surprised and interested by our little adventure. We're in a tough spot. Don't try any tricks." Bond jerked back his head. "This man's a killer."

The girl said angrily, "If only you hadn't interfered."

"Same to you," said Bond shortly. He took it back. "I'm sorry, Tilly. Didn't mean that. But I don't think you could have got away with it."

"I had my plans. I'd have been over the frontier by midnight."

Bond didn't answer. Something had caught his eye. On top of the tall chimney, the oblong mouth of the radar-thing was revolving again. It was that that had spotted them—heard them. It must be some kind of sonic detector. What a bag of tricks this man was! Bond hadn't meant to underestimate Goldfinger. Had he managed to do so—decisively? Perhaps, if he had had his gun . . . ? No. Bond knew that even his split-second draw wouldn't have beaten the Korean—wouldn't do so now. There was a total deadliness about this man. Whether Bond had been armed or unarmed, it would have been a man fighting a tank.

They reached the courtyard. As they did so, the back door of the house opened. Two more Koreans, who might have been the servants from Reculver, ran out towards them through the warm splash of electric light. They carried ugly-looking polished sticks. "Stop!" Both men wore the savage, empty grin that men from Station J, who had been in Japanese prison camps, had described to Bond. "We search. No trouble or . . ." The man who had spoken, cut the air with a whistling lash of his stick. "Hands up!"

Bond put his hands slowly up. He said to the girl, "Don't react . . . whatever they do."

Oddjob came forward and stood, menacingly, watching the search. The search was expert. Bond coldly watched the hands on the girl, the grinning faces.

"Okay. Come!"

They were herded through the open door and along a stone-flagged passage to the narrow entrance hall at the front of the house. The house smelled as Bond had imagined it would—musty and fragrant and summery. There were white-panelled doors. Oddjob knocked on one of them.

"Yes?"

Oddjob opened the door. They were prodded through.

Goldfinger sat at a big desk. It was neatly encumbered with important-looking papers. The desk was flanked by grey metal filing cabinets. Beside the desk, within reach of Goldfinger's hand, stood a short-wave wireless set on a low table. There was an operator's keyboard and a machine that ticked busily and looked like a barograph. Bond guessed that this had something to do with the detector that had intercepted them.

Goldfinger wore his purple velvet smoking-jacket over an open-necked white silk shirt. The open neck showed a tuft of orange chest-hair. He sat very erect in a high-backed chair. He hardly glanced at the girl. The big china-blue eyes were fixed on Bond. They showed no surprise. They held no expression except a piercing hardness.

Bond blustered, "Look here, Goldfinger. What the hell's all this about? You put the police on to me over that ten thousand dollars and I got on your tracks with my girl friend here, Miss Soames. I've come to find out what the hell you mean by it. We climbed the fence—I know it's trespassing, but I wanted to catch you before you moved on somewhere else. Then this ape of yours came along and damned near killed one of us with his bow and arrow. Two more of your bloody Koreans held us up and searched us. What the hell's going on? If you can't give me a civil answer and full apologies I'll put the police on you."

Goldfinger's flat, hard stare didn't flicker. He might not have heard Bond's angry-gentleman's outburst. The finely chiselled lips parted. He said, "Mr Bond, they have a saying in Chicago: 'Once is happenstance. Twice is coincidence. The third time it's enemy action.' Miami, Sandwich and now Geneva. I propose to wring the truth out of you." Goldfinger's eyes slid slowly past Bond's head. "Oddjob. The Pressure Room."

PART THREE : ENEMY ACTION

CHAPTER 15

THE PRESSURE ROOM

BOND'S REACTION was automatic. There was no reason behind it. He took one quick step forward and hurled himself across the desk at Goldfinger. His body, launched in a shallow dive, hit the top of the desk and ploughed through the litter of papers. There was a heavy thud as the top of his head crashed into Goldfinger's breastbone. The momentum of the blow rocked Goldfinger in his chair. Bond kicked back at the edge of the desk, got a purchase and rammed forward again. As the chair toppled backwards and the two bodies went down in the splintering woodwork, Bond's fingers got to the throat and his thumbs went into its base and downwards with every ounce of his force.

Then the whole house fell on Bond, a baulk of timber hit him at the base of the neck and he rolled sluggishly off Goldfinger on to the floor and lay still.

The vortex of light through which Bond was whirling slowly flattened into a disc, a yellow moon, and then into a burning Cyclops eye. Something was written round the fiery eyeball. It was a message, an important message for him. He must read it. Carefully, one by one, Bond spelled out the tiny letters. The message said: SOCIÉTÉ ANONYME MAZDA. What was its significance? A hard bolt of water hit Bond in the face. The water stung his eyes and filled his mouth. He retched desperately and tried to move. He couldn't. His eyes cleared, and his brain. There was a throbbing pain at the back of his neck. He was staring up into a big enamelled light bowl with one powerful bulb. He was on some sort of a table and his wrists and ankles were bound to its edges. He felt with his fingers. He felt polished metal.

A voice, Goldfinger's voice, flat, uninterested, said, "Now we can begin."

Bond turned his head towards the voice. His eyes were dazzled by the light. He squeezed them hard and opened them. Goldfinger was sitting in a canvas chair. He had taken off his jacket and was in his shirt sleeves. There were red marks round the base of his throat. On a folding table beside him were various tools and metal instruments and a control panel. On the other side of the table Tilly Masterton sat in another chair. She was strapped to it by her wrists and ankles. She sat bolt upright as if she was in school. She looked incredibly beautiful, but shocked, remote. Her eyes gazed vacantly at Bond. She was either drugged or hypnotized.

Bond turned his head to the right. A few feet away stood the Korean. He still wore his bowler hat but now he was stripped to the waist. The yellow skin of his huge torso glistened with sweat. There was no hair on it. The flat pectoral muscles were as broad as dinner plates and the stomach was concave below the great arch of the ribs. The biceps and forearms, also hairless, were as thick as thighs. The ten-minutes-to-two oil slicks of the eyes looked pleased, greedy. The mouthful of blackish teeth formed an oblong grin of anticipation.

Bond raised his head. The quick look round hurt. They were in one of the factory workrooms. White light blazed round the iron doors of two electric furnaces. There were bluish sheets of metal stacked in wooden frames. From somewhere came the whir of a generator. There was a distant, muffled sound of hammering, and, behind the sound, the faraway iron pant of the power plant.

Bond glanced down the table on which he lay spread-eagled. He let his head fall back with a sigh. There was a narrow slit down the centre of the polished steel table. At the far end of the slit, like a foresight framed in the vee of his parted feet, were the glinting teeth of a circular saw.

Bond lay and stared up at the little message on the lamp bulb. Goldfinger began to speak in a relaxed conversational voice. Bond pulled the curtains tight across the ghastly peep-show of his imagination and listened.

"Mr Bond, the word 'pain' comes from the Latin *poena* meaning 'penalty'—that which must be paid. You must now pay for the inquisitiveness which your attack upon me proves, as I suspected, to be inimical. Curiosity, as they say,

killed the cat. This time it will have to kill two cats, for I fear I must also count this girl an enemy. She tells me she is staying at the Bergues. One telephone call proved that to be false. Oddjob was sent to where you were both hidden and recovered her rifle and also a ring which it happens that I recognize. Under hypnotism the rest came out. This girl came here to kill me. Perhaps you did too. You have both failed. Now must come the *poena*. Mr Bond—"the voice was weary, bored—"I have had many enemies in my time. I am very successful and immensely rich, and riches, if I may inflict another of my aphorisms upon you, may not make you friends but they greatly increase the class and variety of your enemies."

"That's very neatly put."

Goldfinger ignored the interruption. "If you were a free man, with your talent for inquiry, you would be able to find round the world the relics of those who have wished me ill, or who have tried to thwart me. There have, as I said, been many of these people and you would find, Mr Bond, that their remains resemble those of hedgehogs squashed upon the roads in summertime."

"Very poetic simile."

"By chance, Mr Bond. I am a poet in deeds—not often in words. I am concerned to arrange my actions in appropriate and effective patterns. But that is by the way. I wish to convey to you that it was a most evil day for you when you first crossed my path and, admittedly in a very minor fashion, thwarted a minuscule project upon which I was engaged. On that occasion it was someone else who suffered the *poena* that should have been meted out to you. An eye was taken for the eye, but it was not yours. You were lucky and, if you had then found an oracle to consult, the oracle would have said to you, 'Mr Bond, you have been fortunate. Keep away from Mr Auric Goldfinger. He is a most powerful man. If Mr Goldfinger wanted to crush you, he would only have to turn over in his sleep to do so.'"

"You express yourself most vividly." Bond turned his head. The great brown and orange football of a head was bent slightly forward. The round moon-face was bland, indifferent. Casually, one hand reached out to the control panel and pressed down a switch. There came a slow metallic growl from the end of the table on which Bond lay. It

curved quickly up to a harsh whine and then to a shrill high whistle that was barely audible. Bond turned his head wearily away. How soon could he manage to die? Was there any way he could hasten death? A friend of his had survived the Gestapo. He had described to Bond how he had tried to commit suicide by holding his breath. By superhuman will-power, after a few minutes without breathing, unconsciousness had come. But, with the blackout of the senses, will and intention had also left the body. At once reason was forgotten. The body's instinct to live manned the pumps and got breath back into the body again. But Bond could try it. There was nothing else to help him through the pain barrier before the blessing of death. For death was the only exit. He knew he could never squeal to Goldfinger and live with himself again—even in the unlikely event that Goldfinger could be bought off with the truth. No, he must stick to his thin story and hope that the others who would now follow him on Goldfinger's trail would have better luck. Who would M choose? Probably 008, the second killer in the small section of three. He was a good man, more careful than Bond. M would know that Goldfinger had killed Bond and he would give 008 licence to kill in return. 258 in Geneva would put him on to the scent that would end with Bond's inquiry about the Entreprises Auric. Yes, fate would catch up with Goldfinger if Bond could only keep his mouth shut. If he gave the least clue away, Goldfinger would escape. That was unthinkable.

"Now then, Mr Bond," Goldfinger's voice was brisk. "Enough of these amiabilities. Sing, as my Chicago friends put it, and you will die quickly and painlessly. The girl also. Sing not, and your death will be one long scream. The girl I shall then give to Oddjob, as I did that cat, for supper. Which is it to be?"

Bond said, "Don't be a fool, Goldfinger. I told my friends at Universal where I was going and why. The girl's parents know that she went with me. I made inquiries about this factory of yours before we came here. We shall be traced here very easily. Universal is powerful. You will have the police after you within days of our disappearance. I will make a deal with you. Let us go and nothing more will be heard of the matter. I will vouch for the girl. You are making a stupid mistake. We are two perfectly innocent people."

Goldfinger said in a bored voice, "I'm afraid you don't understand, Mr. Bond. Whatever you have managed to find out about me, which I suspect is very little, can only be a grain of the truth. I am engaged upon gigantic enterprises. To take the gamble of letting either of you leave here alive would be quite ludicrous. It is out of the question. As for my being bothered by the police, I shall be delighted to receive them if they come. Those of my Koreans who can speak won't do so—nor will the mouths of my electric furnaces which will have vaporized you both and all your belongings at two thousand degrees Centigrade. No, Mr. Bond, make your choice. Perhaps I can encourage you"—there came the noise of a lever moving across iron teeth. "The saw is now approaching your body at about one inch every minute. Meanwhile," he glanced at Oddjob and held up one finger, "a little massage from Oddjob. To begin with, only grade one. Grades two and three are still more persuasive."

Bond closed his eyes. The sickly zoo-smell of Oddjob enveloped him. Big, rasping fingers set to work on him carefully, delicately. A pressure here, combined with a pressure there, a sudden squeeze, a pause, and then a quick, sharp blow. Always the hard hands were surgically accurate. Bond ground his teeth until he thought they would break. The sweat of pain began to form pools in the sockets of his closed eyes. The shrill whine of the saw was getting louder. It reminded Bond of the sawdust-scented sounds of long ago summer evenings at home in England. Home? This was his home, this cocoon of danger he had chosen to live in. And here he would be buried 'in some corner of a foreign blast furnace that is for ever two thousand degrees Centigrade'. God rest ye merry gentlemen of the Secret Service! What should he give himself as an epitaph? What should be his 'famous last words'? That you have no choice about your birth, but you can choose the way you die? Yes, it would look well on a tombstone—not *Savoir vivre* but *Savoir mourir*.

"Mr Bond." Goldfinger's voice held an ounce of urgency. "Is this really necessary? Just tell me the truth. Who are you? Who sent you here? What do you know? Then it will be so easy. You shall both have a pill. There will be no pain. It will be like taking a sleeping draught. Otherwise

it will be so messy—so messy and distressing. And are you being fair to the girl? Is this the behaviour of an English gentleman?"

Oddjob's torment had stopped. Bond turned his head slowly towards the voice and opened his eyes. He said, "Goldfinger, there is nothing more to tell because there is nothing. If you will not accept my first bargain I will make you another. The girl and I will work for you. How about that? We are capable people. You could put us to good use."

"And get a knife, two knives in my back? Thank you no, Mr Bond."

Bond decided it was time to stop talking. It was time to start winding up the mainspring of will-power that must not run down again until he was dead. Bond said politely, "Then you can go and — yourself." He expelled all the breath from his lungs and closed his eyes.

"Even I am not capable of that, Mr Bond," said Goldfinger with good humour. "And now, since you have chosen the stony path instead of the smooth, I must extract what interest I can from your predicament by making the path as stony as possible. Oddjob, grade two."

The lever on the table moved across iron teeth. Now Bond could feel the wind of the saw between his knees. The hands came back.

Bond counted the slowly pounding pulse that utterly possessed his body. It was like the huge panting power plant in the other part of the factory but, in his case, it was slowly decelerating. If only it would slow down quicker. What was this ridiculous will to live that refused to listen to the brain? Who was making the engine run on although the tank was dry of fuel? But he must empty his mind of thought, as well as his body of oxygen. He must become a vacuum, a deep hole of unconsciousness.

Still the light burned red through his eyelids. Still he could feel the bursting pressure in his temples. Still the slow drum of life beat in his ears.

A scream tried to force its way through the clamped teeth.

Die damn you die die damn you die damn you die damn you die damn you die . . .

THE LAST AND THE BIGGEST

THE wings of a dove, the heavenly choir, Hark the Herald Angels Sing—what else ought he to remember about Paradise? It was all so exactly like what he had been told in the nursery—this sensation of flying, the darkness, the drone of a million harps. He really must try and remember the dope about the place. Let's see now, one got to the Pearly Gates...

A deep fatherly voice said, almost in his ear, "This is your captain speaking." (Well, well. Who was this. Saint Peter?) "We are coming in to land now. Will you please fasten your seat belts and extinguish your cigarettes. Thank you."

There must be a whole lot of them, going up together. Would Tilly be on the same trip? Bond squirmed with embarrassment. How would he introduce her to the others, to Vesper for instance? And when it came to the point, which would he like the best? But perhaps it would be a big place with countries and towns. There was probably no more reason why he should run into one of his former girl friends here than there had been on earth. But still there were a lot of people he'd better avoid until he got settled in and found out the form. Perhaps, with so much love about, these things wouldn't matter. Perhaps one just loved all the girls one met. Hm. Tricky business!

With these unworthy thoughts in his mind, Bond relapsed into unconsciousness.

The next thing he knew was a gentle sensation of swaying. He opened his eyes. The sun blinded them. He closed them again. A voice above and behind his head said, "Watch it, bud. That ramp's steeper than it looks." Almost immediately there was a heavy jolt. A surly voice in front said, "Cheesus, you're telling me. Why in hell can't they put down rubber?"

Bond thought angrily, that's a fine way to talk up here. Just because I'm new and they think no one's listening.

There was the bang of a swing door. Something hit Bond sharply on a protruding elbow. He shouted "Hey!" and tried to reach his elbow and rub it, but his hands wouldn't move.

"Whaddya know. Hey, Sam, better call the doc. This one's come round."

"Sure! Here, put him alongside the other." Bond felt himself being lowered. It was cooler now. He opened his eyes. A big round Brooklyn face was bent over his. The eyes met his and smiled. The metal supports of the stretcher touched the ground. The man said, "How ya feelin', mister?"

"Where am I?" Now there was panic in Bond's voice. He tried to rise but couldn't. He felt the sweat break out on his body. God! Was this still part of the old life? At the thought of it, a wave of grief poured through his body. Tears burned his eyes and trickled down his cheeks.

"Hey, hey! Take it easy, mister. You're okay. This is Idlewild, New York. You're in America now. No more troubles, see." The man straightened up. He thought Bond was a refugee from somewhere. "Sam, get movin'. This guy's in shock."

"Okay, okay." The two voices receded, mumbling anxiously.

Bond found he could move his head. He looked round. He was in a white-painted ward—presumably something to do with the health department of the airport. There was a row of tidy beds. Sun poured down from high windows, but it was cool, air-conditioned. He was on a stretcher on the floor. There was another one next to it. He strained his head sideways. It was Tilly. She was unconscious. Her pale face, framed in the black hair, pointed at the ceiling.

The door at the end of the ward sighed open. A doctor in a white coat stood and held it. Goldfinger, looking brisk, cheerful, walked swiftly down between the beds. He was followed by Oddjob. Bond wearily closed his eyes. Christ! So that was the score.

Feet gathered round his stretcher. Goldfinger said breezily, "Well, they certainly look in good shape, eh, Doctor? That's one of the blessings of having enough money. When one's friends or one's staff are ill one can get them the very best medical attention. Nervous breakdowns, both of them.

ory. His washing and shaving things were neatly laid out. There were a girl's things beside them. Bond softly opened another door into the bathroom. It was a similar room to the one he had just left. Tilly Masterton's black hair showed on the pillow. Bond tiptoed over and looked down. She was sleeping peacefully, a half-smile on the beautiful mouth. Bond went back into the bathroom, softly closed the door and went to the mirror over the basin and looked at himself. The black stubble looked more like three days than two. He set to work to clean himself up.

Half an hour later, Bond was sitting on the edge of his bunk thinking, when the door without a handle opened abruptly. Oddjob stood in the entrance. He looked incuriously at Bond. His eyes flickered carefully round the room. Bond said sharply, "Oddjob, I want a lot of food, quickly. And a bottle of bourbon, soda and ice. Also a carton of Chesterfields, king-size, and either my own watch or another one as good as mine. Quick march! Chop-chop! And tell Goldfinger I want to see him, but not until I've had something to eat. Come on! Jump to it! Don't stand there looking inscrutable. I'm hungry."

Oddjob looked redly at Bond as if wondering which piece to break. He opened his mouth, uttered a noise between an angry bark and a belch, spat drily on the floor at his feet and stepped back, whirling the door shut. When the slam should have come, the door decelerated abruptly and closed with a soft, decisive, double click.

The encounter put Bond in good humour. For some reason Goldfinger had decided against killing them. He wanted them alive. Soon Bond would know why he wanted them alive but, so long as he did, Bond intended to stay alive on his own terms. Those terms included putting Oddjob and any other Korean firmly in his place, which in Bond's estimation, was rather lower than apes in the mammalian hierarchy.

By the time an excellent meal together with everything else, including his watch, Bond had asked for, had been brought by one of the Korean servants, Bond had learned nothing more about his circumstances except that his room was close to water and not far from a railway bridge. Assuming his room was in New York, it was either the Hudson or the East River. The railway was electric

sounded like a subway, but Bond's New York geography was not good enough to place it. His watch had stopped. When he asked the time he got no answer.

Bond had eaten all the food on the tray and was smoking and sipping a solid bourbon and soda when the door opened. Goldfinger came in alone. He was wearing a regulation businessman's clothes and looked relaxed and cheerful. He closed the door behind him and stood with his back to it. He looked searchingly at Bond. Bond smoked and looked politely back.

Goldfinger said, "Good morning, Mr Bond. I see you are yourself again. I hope you prefer being here to being dead. So as to save you the trouble of asking a lot of conventional questions, I will tell you where you are and what has happened to you. I will then put to you a proposition to which I require an unequivocal reply. You are a more reasonable man than most, so I need only give you one brief warning. Do not attempt any dramatics. Do not attack me with a knife or a fork or that bottle. If you do, I shall shoot you with this." A small-calibre pistol grew like a black thumb out of Goldfinger's right fist. He put the hand with the gun back in his pocket. "I very seldom use these things. When I have had to, I have never needed more than one .25-calibre bullet to kill. I shoot at the right eye, Mr Bond. And I never miss."

Bond said, "Don't worry, I'm not as accurate as that with a bourbon bottle." He hitched up the knee of his trousers and put one leg across the other. He sat relaxed. "Go ahead."

"Mr Bond," Goldfinger's voice was amiable. "I am an expert in many other materials beside metals and I have a keen appreciation of everything that is one thousand fine, as we say of the purest gold. In comparison with that degree of purity, of value, human material is of a very low grade indeed. But occasionally one comes across a piece of this stuff that can at least be put to the lower forms of use. Oddjob is an example of what I mean—simple, unrefined clay, capable of limited exploitation. At the last moment my hand hesitated to destroy a utensil with the durability I observed in yourself. I may have made a mistake in staying my hand. In any case I shall take the fullest steps to protect myself from the consequences of my impulse. It was some-

ou said that saved your life. You suggested that you
ss Masterton would work for me. Normally I would
o use for either of you, but it just happens that I am
e brink of a certain enterprise in which the services
th of you could be of a certain minimal assistance. So
k the gamble. I gave you both the necessary sedatives.
r bills were paid and your things fetched from the
gues where Miss Masterton turned out to be registered
der her real name. I sent a cable in your name to Universal
port. You had been offered employment in Canada.
ou were flying over to explore the prospects. You were
aking Miss Masterton as your secretary. You would write
urther details. A clumsy cable, but it will serve for the short
period I require your services. (It won't, thought Bond,
unless you included in the text one of the innocent phrases
that would tell M that the cable was authentic. By now, the
Service would know he was working under enemy control.
Wheels would be turning very fast indeed.) And in case
you think, Mr Bond, that my precautions were inadequate,
that you will be traced, let me tell you that I am no longer
in the least interested about your true identity nor the strength
and resources of your employers. You and Miss Masterton
have utterly disappeared, Mr Bond. So have I, so have all
my staff. The airport will refer inquiries to the Harkness
Pavilion at the Presbyterian Hospital. The hospital will
never have heard of Mr Goldfinger nor of his patients. The
FBI and the CIA have no record of me, for I have no crimin
history. No doubt the immigration authorities will ha
details of my comings and goings over the years, but th
will not be helpful. As for my present whereabouts, and yo
Mr Bond, we are now in the warehouse of the Hi-sp
Trucking Corporation, a formerly respectable concern w
I own through nominees and which has been equi
most thoroughly, as the secret headquarters for the ente
of which I spoke. You and Miss Masterton will be co
to these quarters. Here you will live and work and p
though personally I have doubts about Miss Mas
inclinations in that respect, make love."

"And what will our work consist of?"

"Mr Bond—" For the first time since Bond ha
Goldfinger, the big, bland face, always empty c
sion, showed a trace of life. A look almost c

illuminated the eyes. The finely chiselled lips pursed into a thin, beatic curve. "Mr Bond, all my life I have been in love. I have been in love with gold. I love its colour, its brilliance, its divine heaviness. I love the texture of gold, that soft sliminess that I have learnt to gauge so accurately by touch that I can estimate the fineness of a bar to within one carat. And I love the warm tang it exudes when I melt it down into a true golden syrup. But, above all, Mr Bond, I love the power that gold alone gives to its owner—the magic of controlling energy, exacting labour, fulfilling one's every wish and whim and, when need be, purchasing bodies, minds, even souls. Yes, Mr Bond, I have worked all my life for gold and, in return, gold has worked for me and for those enterprises that I have espoused. I ask you," Goldfinger gazed earnestly at Bond, "is there any other substance on earth that so rewards its owner?"

"Many people have become rich and powerful without possessing an ounce of the stuff. But I see your point. How much have you managed to collect and what do you do with it?"

"I own about twenty million pounds' worth, about as much as a small country. It is now all in New York. I keep it where I need it. My treasure of gold is like a compost heap. I move it here and there over the face of the earth and, wherever I choose to spread it, that corner blossoms and blooms. I reap the harvest and move on. At this moment I am proposing to encourage, to force, a certain American enterprise with my golden compost. Therefore the gold bars are in New York."

"How do you choose these enterprises? What attracts you to them?"

"I espouse any enterprise that will increase my stock of gold. I invest, I smuggle, I steal." Goldfinger made a small gesture of the hands, opening the palms persuasively. "If you will follow the simile, regard history as a train speeding along through time. Birds and animals are disturbed by the noise and tumult of the train's passage, they fly away from it or run fearfully or cower, thinking they hide. I am like the hawk that follows the train—you have no doubt seen them doing this, in Greece for instance—ready to pounce on anything that may be flushed by the train's passage, by the passage of history. To give you a simple example: the

of history produces a man who invents penicillin. At the same time, history creates a world war. Many people are dying or afraid of dying. Penicillin will save them. Through bribery at certain military establishments on the Continent, I obtain stocks of penicillin. I water these down to some harmless powder or liquid and sell them at immense profit to those who crave the stuff. You see what I can do, Mr Bond? You have to wait for the prey, watch it carefully and then pounce. But, as I say, I do not search out enterprises. I allow the train of history to flush them towards me."

"What's the latest one? What have Miss Masterton and I got to do with it?"

"The latest one, Mr Bond, is the last one. It is also the biggest." Goldfinger's eyes were now blank, focused inwards. His voice became low, almost reverential at what he saw. "Man has climbed Everest and he has scraped the depths of the ocean. He has fired rockets into outer space and split the atom. He has invented, devised, created in every realm of human endeavour, and everywhere he has triumphed, broken records, achieved miracles. I said in every realm, but there is one that has been neglected, Mr Bond. That one is the human activity loosely known as crime. The so-called criminal exploits committed by individual humans—I do not of course refer to their idiotic wars, their clumsy destruction of each other—are of miserable dimensions: little bank robberies, tiny swindles, picayune forgeries. And yet, ready to hand, a few hundred miles from here, opportunity for the greatest crime in history stands waiting. The stage is set, the gigantic prize is offered. On the actors are missing. But the producer is at last here, Mr Bond"—Goldfinger raised a finger and tapped his chest—"and he has chosen his cast. This very afternoon the scene will be read to the leading actors. Then rehearsals will begin, and, in one week, the curtain will go up for the single unique performance. And then will come the applause, applause for the greatest extra-legal coup of all time. Mr Bond, the world will rock with that applause for centuries."

Now a dull fire burned in Goldfinger's big pale eyes. There was a touch of extra colour in his red-brown hair. But he was still calm, relaxed, profoundly convinced.

the threshold, crouching, alert. When Goldfinger said, "You will have many questions beginning at two-thirty. They will all be answered this afternoon." Bond glanced at his watch and adjusted it. "You and Miss Masterton will attend the meeting at which the proposition will be put to the heads of the six organizations I have mentioned. No doubt these people will ask the same questions as occur to you. Everything will be explained. Afterwards you will settle down to detailed work with Miss Masterton. Ask for what you want. Oddjob will see to your welfare and also be on permanent guard. Do not be obstreperous or you will instantly be killed. And do not waste time trying to escape or to contact the outside world. I have hired your services and I shall require every ounce of them. Is that a bargain?"

Bond said drily, "I've always wanted to be a millionaire." Goldfinger didn't look at him. He looked at his fingernails. Then he gave Bond one last hard glance and went out and shut the door behind him. Bond sat and gazed at the closed door. He brusquely ran both hands through his hair and down over his face. He said "Well, well" aloud to the empty room, got up and walked through the bathroom to the girl's bedroom. He knocked on the door.

"Who is it?"

"Me. Are you visible?"

"Yes." The voice was unenthusiastic. "Come in." She was sitting on the edge of the bed, pulling on a shawl. She was wearing the things Bond had first seen her wear. She looked cool and collected and unsurprised by her surroundings. She looked up at Bond. Her eyes were a disdainful. She said coldly, precisely, "You've got us into a bad way. Get us out."

Bond said amiably, "I may be able to. I got us out of the last one."

"After getting us into them."

Bond looked thoughtfully at the girl. He decided to be ungallant to spank her, so to speak, on an empty stomach. He said, "This won't get us anywhere. We're not going together, whether we like it or not. What do you

breakfast or lunch? It's a quarter past twelve. I've eaten. I'll order yours and then come back and tell you the score. There's only one way out of here and Oddjob, that Korean ape, is guarding it. Now then, breakfast or lunch?"

She unbent an inch. "Thank you. Scrambled eggs and coffee, please. And toast and marmalade."

"Cigarettes?"

"No, thank you. I don't smoke."

Bond went back to his room and knocked on the door. It opened an inch.

Bond said, "All right, Oddjob. I'm not going to kill you yet."

The door opened farther. Oddjob's face was impassive. Bond gave the order. The door closed. Bond poured himself a bourbon and soda. He sat on the edge of the bed and wondered how he was going to get the girl on his side. From the beginning she had resented him. Was that only because of her sister? Why had Goldfinger made that cryptic remark about her 'inclinations'? What was there about her that he himself felt—something withdrawn, inimical. She was beautiful—physically desirable. But there was a cold, hard centre to her that Bond couldn't understand or define. Oh well, the main thing was to get her to go along. Otherwise life in prison would be intolerable.

Bond went back into her room. He left both doors open so that he could hear. She was still sitting on the bed wrapped in a coiled immobility. She watched Bond carefully. Bond leaned against the jamb of the door. He took a long pull at his whisky. He said, looking her in the eye, "You'd better know that I'm from Scotland Yard"—the euphemism would serve. "We're after this man Goldfinger. He doesn't mind. He thinks no one can find us for at least a week. He's probably right. He saved our lives because he wants us to work for him on a crime. It's big business. Pretty scatter-brained. But there's a lot of planning and paperwork. We've got to look after that side. Can you do shorthand and typing?"

"Yes." Her eyes were alight. "What's the crime?"

Bond told her. He said, "Of course it all sounds ridiculous and I daresay a few questions and answers will show these gangsters, if they don't show Goldfinger, that the whole thing's impossible. But I don't know. Goldfinger's—"

extraordinary man. From what I know
er moves unless the odds are right. And I don't
s mad—at least not madder than other kinds of geniuses
scientists and so on. And there's no doubt he's a genius
his particular field."

"So what are you going to do about it?"
Bond lowered his voice. He said, "What are *we* going to
do about it, you mean. *We* are going to play along. And to
the hilt. No shirking and no funny business. We're going
to be greedy for the money and we're going to give him
absolutely top-notch service. Apart from saving our lives,
which mean less than nothing to him, it's the only hope
we, or rather I because that's my line of country, can have
of a chance to queer his pitch."

"How are you going to do that?"
"I haven't the faintest idea. Something may turn up."
"And you expect me to go along with you?"
"Why not? Any other suggestions?"

She pursed her lips obstinately. "Why should I do what
you say?"
Bond sighed. "There's no point in being a suffragette
about this. It's either that or get yourself killed after break-
fast. It's up to you."

The mouth turned down with distaste. She shrugged
her shoulders. She said ungraciously, "Oh, all right then."
Suddenly her eyes flared. "Only don't ever touch me or I
shall kill you."

There came the click of Bond's bedroom door. Bond
looked mildly down at Tilly Masterton. "The challeng-
is attractive. But don't worry. I won't take it up." He turn-
and strolled out of the room.

One of the Koreans passed him carrying the girl's bre-
fast. In his room another Korean had brought in a typi-
desk and chair and a Remington portable. He arran-
them in the corner away from the bed. Oddjob was stan-
in the doorway. He held out a sheet of paper. Bond wen-
to him and took it.

It was a foolscap memo sheet. The writing, with
point, was neat, careful, legible, undistinguished. It said

Prepare ten copies of this agenda.

Meeting held under the chairmanship of Mr Gold

Secretaries: J. Bond

Miss Tilly Masterton

Present

Helmut M. Springer

Jed Midnight

Billy (The Grinner) Ring

Jack Strap

Mr Solo

Miss Pussy Galore

The Purple Gang. Detroit

Shadow Syndicate. Miami and
Havana

The Machine. Chicago

The Spangled Mob. Las Vegas

Unione Siciliano

The Cement Mixers. Harlem.
New York City

Agenda

A project with the code name OPERATION GRAND SLAM.
(Refreshments.)

At the end of this was written, 'You and Miss Masterton will be fetched at 2.20. Both will be prepared to take notes. Formal dress, please.'

Bond smiled. The Koreans left the room. He sat down at the desk, slipped paper and carbons into the typewriter and set to. At least he would show the girl that he was prepared to do his stint. Gosh, what a crew! Even the Mafia had come in. How had Goldfinger persuaded them all to come? And who in heaven's name was Miss Pussy Galore?

Bond had the copies finished by two o'clock. He went into the girl's room and gave them to her together with a shorthand notebook and pencils. He also read her Goldfinger's note. He said, "You'd better get these names in your head. They probably won't be hard to identify. We can ask if we get stuck. I'll go and get into my formal dress." He smiled at her. "Twenty minutes to go."

She nodded.

Walking down the corridor behind Oddjob, Bond could hear the sounds of the river—the slapping of water on the piles below the warehouse, the long mournful hoot of a ferry clearing her way, the distant thump of diesels. Somewhere beneath his feet a truck started up, revved and then growled away presumably towards the West Side Highway. They must be on the top tier of the long two-tiered building. The grey paint in the corridor smelled new. There were no side doors. Light came from bowls in the ceiling. They reached the end. Oddjob knocked. There was the sound of a Yale

being turned and two lots of bolts being pulled and
looked through and into a large bright sunlit room. The
room was over the end of the warehouse and a wide picture
window, filling most of the facing wall, framed the river
and the distant brown muddle of Jersey City. The room
had been dressed for the conference. Goldfinger sat with his
back to the window at a large round table with a green
baize cloth, carafes of water, yellow scratch-pads and pencils.
There were nine comfortable armchairs and on the scratch-
pads in front of six of them were small oblong white parcels
sealed with red wax. To the right, against the wall, was a
long buffet table gleaming with silver and cut glass. Cham-
pagne stood in silver coolers and there was a row of other
bottles. Among the various foods Bond noticed two round
five-pound tins of Beluga caviar and several terrines of
foie gras. On the wall opposite the buffet hung a blackboard
above a table on which there were papers and one large ob-
long carton.

Goldfinger watched them come towards him across the
thick wine-red carpet. He gestured to the chair on his left
for Tilly Masterton and to the one on the right for Bond.
They sat down.

"The agenda?" Goldfinger took the copies, read the top
one and handed them back to the girl. He gave a circular
wave of the hand and she got up and distributed the copies
round the table. He put his hand beneath the table and
pressed a hidden bell. The door at the back of the room
opened. One of the Koreans came in and stood waiting.
"Is everything ready?" The man nodded. "You understand
that no one is to come into this room but the people
on your list? Good. Some of them, perhaps all, will bring
a companion. The companions will remain in the anteroom.
See that they have everything they wish. The cards
there and the dice? Oddjob." Goldfinger glanced up at
the Korean who had remained behind Bond's chair. "Go
take up your position. What is the signal?" Oddjob
up two fingers. "Right. Two rings on the bell. You must
see that all the staff carry out their duties to perfection."
Bond said casually, "How many staff have you got?"
"Twenty. Ten Koreans and ten Germans. They
are excellent men, hand picked. Much goes on in this
building. It is like below-decks in a man-of-war." G

laid his hands flat on the table in front of him. "And now, your duties. Miss Masterton, you will take notes of any practical points that arise, anything that is likely to require action by me. Do not bother with the argument and chatter. Right?"

Bond was glad to see that Tilly Masterton now looked bright and businesslike. She nodded briskly, "Certainly."

"And, Mr Bond, I shall be interested in any reactions you may have to the speakers. I know a great deal about all these people. In their own territories they are paramount chiefs. They are only here because I have bribed them to come. They know nothing of me and I need to persuade them that I know what I am talking about and will lead them to success. Greed will do the rest. But there may be one or more who wish to back out. They will probably reveal themselves. In their cases I have made special arrangements. But there may be doubtful ones. During the talk, you will scribble with your pencil on this agenda. Casually you will note with a plus or a minus sign opposite the names whether you consider each one for or against the project. I shall be able to see what sign you have made. Your views may be useful. And do not forget, Mr Bond, that one traitor among them, one backslider, and we could quickly find ourselves either dead or in prison for life."

"Who is this Pussy Galore from Harlem?"

"She is the only woman who runs a gang in America. It is a gang of women. I shall need some women for this operation. She is entirely reliable. She was a trapeze artiste. She had a team. It was called 'Pussy Galore and her Abro-cats.'" Goldfinger did not smile. "The team was unsuccessful, so she trained them as burglars, cat burglars. It grew into a gang of outstanding ruthlessness. It is a Lesbian organization which now calls itself 'The Cement Mixers'. Even the big American gangs respect them. She is a remarkable woman."

A buzzer sounded very softly beneath the table. Goldfinger straightened himself. The door at the end of the room opened briskly and five men came in. Goldfinger rose in his chair and ducked his head in welcome. He said, "My name is Gold. Will you please be seated."

There was a careful murmur. Silently the men closed round the table, pulled out chairs and sat down. Five pairs of eyes looked coldly, warily at Goldfinger. Goldfinger

...n. He said quietly, "Gentlemen, in the parcels before you will find one twenty-four-carat gold bar, value seven thousand dollars. I thank you for the courtesy of your attendance. The agenda is self-explanatory. Perhaps, while we wait for Miss Galore, I could run through your names for the information of my secretaries, Mr Bond here, and Miss Masterton. No notes will be made of this meeting, except on action you may wish me to take, and I can assure you there are no microphones. Now then, Mr Bond, on your right is Mr Jed Midnight of the Shadow Syndicate operating out of Miami and Havana."

Mr Midnight was a big, good-living man with a jovial face but slow careful eyes. He wore a light blue tropical suit over a white silk shirt ornamented with small green palm trees. The complicated gold watch on his wrist must have weighed nearly half a pound. He smiled tautly at Bond and said, "Howdo."

"Then we have Mr Billy Ring who controls the famous Chicago 'Machine'."

Bond thought he had never seen anyone who was less of 'Billy'. It was a face out of a nightmare and, as the face turned towards Bond, it knew it was, and watched Bond for his reactions. It was a pale, pear-shaped, baby face with downy skin and a soft thatch of straw-coloured hair, but the eyes, which should have been pale blue, were a tawny brown. The whites showed all round the pupils and gave a mesmeric quality to the hard thoughtful stare, unsoftened by a tic in the right eyelid which made the right eye wink with the heart-beat. At some early stage in Mr Ring's career someone had cut off Mr Ring's lower lip—perhaps he had talked too much—and this had given him a permanent false smile like the grin of a Hallowe'en pumpkin. He was about forty years old. Bond summed him up as a merciful killer. Bond smiled cheerfully into the hard stare of Mr Ring's left eye and looked past him at the man Goldfinger introduced as Mr Helmut Springer of the Detroit Purple Gang.

Mr Springer had the glazed eyes of someone who was either very rich or very dead. The eyes were pale blue, of glass marbles which briefly recognized Bond and turned inwards again in complete absorption with him. The rest of Mr Springer was a 'man of distinction'—casually pin-striped, Hathaway-shirted, Aqua-Velva-

gave the impression of someone who found himself in the wrong company—a first-class ticket holder in a third-class compartment, a man from the stalls who has been shown by mistake to a seat in the pit.

Mr Midnight put his hand up to his mouth and said softly for Bond's benefit, "Don't be taken in by the Duke. My friend Helmut was the man who put the piquéd shirt on the hood. Daughter goes to Vassar, but it's protection money that pays for her hockey-sticks." Bond nodded his thanks.

"And Mr Solo of the *Unione Siciliano*."

Mr Solo had a dark heavy face, gloomy with the knowledge of much guilt and many sins. His thick horn-rimmed spectacles helioed briefly in Bond's direction and then bent again to the business of cleaning Mr Solo's nails with a pocket knife. He was a big, chunky man, half boxer, half head waiter, and it was quite impossible to tell what was on his mind or where his strength lay. But there is only one head of the Mafia in America and, if Mr Solo had the job, thought Bond, he had got it by strength out of terror. It would be by the exercise of both that he kept it.

"Howdy." Mr Jack Strap of the Spangled Mob had the synthetic charm of a front man for the Las Vegas casinos, but Bond guessed he had inherited from the late lamented brothers Spang thanks to other qualities. He was an expansive, showily dressed man of about fifty. He was coming to the end of a cigar. He smoked it as if he was eating it, munching hungrily. From time to time he turned his head sideways and discreetly spat a scrap of it out on to the carpet behind him. Behind this compulsive smoking there would be a lot of tension. Mr Strap had quick conjuror's eyes. He seemed to know that his eyes frightened people because now, presumably not wanting to frighten Bond, he gave them charm by crinkling them at the corners.

The door at the back of the room opened. A woman in a black masculine-cut suit with a high coffee-coloured lace jabot stood in the doorway. She walked slowly, unself-consciously down the room and stood behind the empty chair. Goldfinger had got to his feet. She examined him carefully and then ran her eyes round the table. She said a collective, bored "Hi" and sat down. Mr Strap said "Hi Pussy," and the others, except Mr Springer who merely bowed, made careful sounds of welcome.

Goldfinger said, "Good afternoon, Miss Galore. We have just been through the formality of introductions. The agenda is before you, together with the fifteen-thousand-dollar gold bar I asked you to accept to meet the expense and inconvenience of attending this meeting."

Miss Galore reached for her parcel and opened it. She weighed the gleaming yellow brick in her hand. She gave Goldfinger a direct, suspicious look. "All the way through?"

"All the way through."

Miss Galore held his eyes. She said "Pardon my asking" with the curt tone of a hard woman shopper at the sales.

Bond liked the look of her. He felt the sexual challenge all beautiful Lesbians have for men. He was amused by the uncompromising attitude that said to Goldfinger and to the room, "All men are bastards and cheats. Don't try any masculine hocus on me. I don't go for it. I'm in a separate league." Bond thought she would be in her early thirties. She had pale, Rupert Brooke good looks with high cheekbones and a beautiful jawline. She had the only violet eyes Bond had ever seen. They were the true deep violet of a pansy and they looked candidly out at the world from beneath straight black brows. Her hair, which was as black as Tilly Masterton's, was worn in an untidy urchin cut. The mouth was a decisive slash of deep vermillion. Bond thought she was superb and so, he noticed, did Tilly Masterton who was gazing at Miss Galore with worshipping eyes and lips that yearned. Bond decided that all was now clear to him about Tilly Masterton.

Goldfinger said, "And now I must introduce myself. My name is not Gold. My credentials are as follows. By various operations, most of them illegitimate, I have made a large sum of money in twenty years. That sum now stands at sixty million dollars." (A respectful hm-ing went round the table.) "My operations have, for the most part, been confined to Europe, but you may be interested to know that I founded and subsequently disposed of the 'Golden Poppy Distributors' who operated out of Hongkong." (Mr Jack Strap whistled softly.) "The 'Happy Landings Travel Agency' which some of you may have employed in emergency, was organized and owned by me until I disbanded it." (M Helmut Springer screwed a rimless monocle into one glaze eye so that he could examine Goldfinger more closely

"I mention these minor concerns to show you that, although you may not know me, I have, in the past, acted at many removes on, I believe, all your behalfs." ("Well, whaddya know!" muttered Mr Jed Midnight with something like awe in his voice.) "That, gentlemen and—er—madam, is how I knew of you and how I came to invite here tonight what I have learned through my own experience to be the aristocracy, if I may so describe it, of American crime."

Bond was impressed. Goldfinger had, in three minutes flat, got the meeting on his side. Now everyone was looking towards Goldfinger with profound attention. Even Miss Pussy Galore's eyes were rapt. Bond knew nothing about the Golden Poppy Distributors or the Happy Landings Agency, but they must have run like clockwork from the expressions on their former customers' faces. Now everyone was hanging on Goldfinger's words as if he was Einstein.

Goldfinger's face showed no emotion. He made a throw-away gesture of his right hand. He said flatly, "I have mentioned two projects of mine that were successful. They were small. There have been many others of a higher calibre. Not one of them has failed, and, so far as I know, my name is on the police files of no country. I say this to show you that I thoroughly understand my—our—profession. And now, gentlemen and madam, I propose to offer you partnership in an undertaking that will assuredly place in each of your treasuries, within one week, the sum of one billion dollars." Mr Goldfinger held up his hand. "We have different views in Europe and America as to what constitutes the arithmetical expression 'a billion'. I use the word in the sense of one thousand million. Do I make myself clear?"

CRIME DE LA CRIME

A rug hooted on the river. Another answered. A flurry of engine noises receded.

Mr Jed Midnight, on Bond's right, cleared his throat. He said emphatically, "Mister Gold, or whatever your name

don't you worry about definitions. A billion dollars is a lot of money whichever way you say it. Keep talking."

Mr Solo raised slow black eyes and looked across the table at Goldfinger. He said, "Is very much money, yess. But how much your cut, mister?"

"Five billion."

Jack Strap from Las Vegas gave a short boisterous laugh. "Listen fellers, what's a few billion between friends. If be glad to slip him a fin or even maybe a mega-fin for his trouble. Don't let's be small-minded about this, huh?"

Mr Helmut Springer tapped his monocle on the gold brick in front of him. Everyone looked towards him. "Mister —ah—Gold." It was the grave voice of the family lawyer. "These are big figures you mention. As I understand it, a total of some eleven billion dollars is involved."

Mr Goldfinger said with precision, "The exact figure will be nearer fifteen billion. For convenience I referred only to the amounts I thought it would be possible for us to carry away."

A sharp excited giggle came from Mr Billy Ring. "Quite, quite, Mr Gold." Mr Springer screwed his monocle back into his eye to observe Goldfinger's reactions. "But quantities of bullion or currency to that amount are to be found gathered together in only three depositories in the United States. They are the Federal Mint in Washington, the Federal Reserve Bank in New York City, and Fort Knox in Kentucky. Do you intend that we should—er—'knock off' one of these? And if so which?"

"Fort Knox."

Amidst the chorus of groans, Mr Midnight said signedly, "Mister, I never met any guy outside Hollywood that had what you've got. There it's called 'vision'. vision, mister, is a talent for mistaking spots before eyes for fabulous projects. You should have a talk your head-shrinker or get yourself Miltownized. Midnight shook his head sorrowfully. "Too bad billion sure felt good while I had it."

Miss Pussy Galore said in a deep, bored voice, mister, none of my set of bent pins could take that piggy-bank." She made to get up.

Goldfinger said amiably, "Now hear me through"

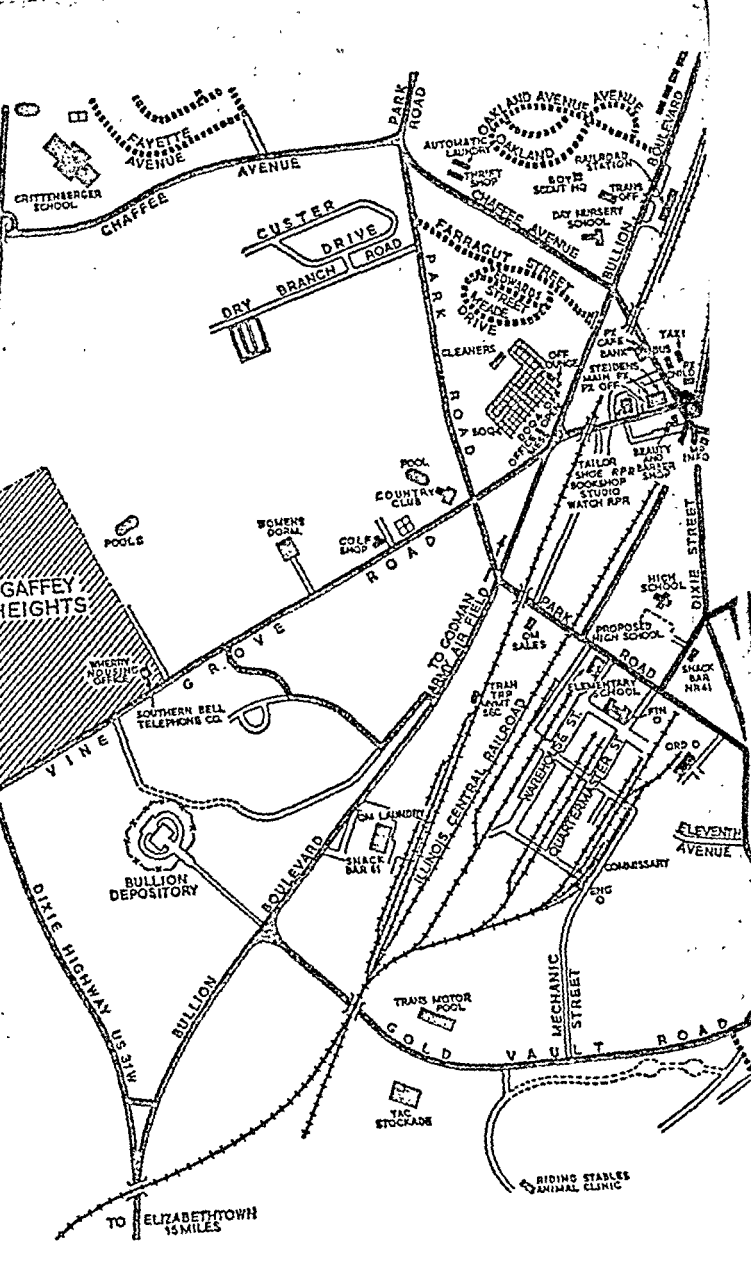
men and—er—madam. Your reaction was not unexpected. Let me put it this way: Fort Knox is a bank like any other bank. But it is a much bigger bank and its protective devices are correspondingly stronger and more ingenious. To penetrate them will require corresponding strength and ingenuity. That is the only novelty in my project—that it is a big one. Nothing else. Fort Knox is no more impregnable than other fortresses. No doubt we all thought the Brink organization was unbeatable until half a dozen determined men robbed a Brink-armoured car of a million dollars back in 1950. It is impossible to escape from Sing Sing and yet men have found ways of escaping from it. No, no, gentlemen. Fort Knox is a myth like other myths. Shall I proceed to the plan?"

Billy Ring hissed through his teeth, like a Japanese, when he talked. He said harshly, "Listen, shamus, mebbe ya didn't know it, but the Third Armoured is located at Fort Knox. If that's a myth, why don't the Russkis come and take the United States the next time they have a team over here playing ice-hockey?"

Goldfinger smiled thinly. "If I may correct you without weakening your case, Mr Ring, the following is the order of battle of the military units presently quartered at Fort Knox. Of the Third Armoured Division, there is only the Spearhead, but there are also the 6th Armoured Cavalry Regiment, the 15th Armour Group, the 160th Engineer Group and approximately half a division from all units of the United States Army currently going through the Armoured Replacement Training Centre and Military Human Research Unit No 1. There is also a considerable body of men associated with Continental Armoured Command Board No 2, the Army Maintenance Board and various activities connected with the Armoured Centre. In addition there is a police force consisting of twenty officers and some four hundred enlisted men. In short, out of a total population of some sixty thousand, approximately twenty thousand are combat troops of one sort or another."

"And who's going to say boo to them?" jeered Mr Jack Strap through his cigar. Without waiting for an answer he disgustedly tore the tattered stump out of his mouth and mashed it to fragments in the ash-tray.

Next to him Miss Pussy Galore sucked her teeth sharply



with the incisiveness of a parrot spitting. She said, "Go buy yourself some better smokes, Jacko. That thing smells like burning wrestlers' trunks."

"Shove it, Puss," said Mr Strap inelegantly.

Miss Galore was determined to have the last word. She said sweetly, "Know what, Jacko? I could go for a he-man like you. Matter of fact I wrote a song about you the other day. Care to hear its title? It's called 'If I had to do it all over again, I'd do it all over you'."

A bray of laughter came from Mr Midnight, a high giggle from Mr Ring. Goldfinger tapped lightly for order. He said patiently, "Now hear me through, please, gentlemen." He got up and walked to the blackboard and pulled a roll map down over it. It was a detailed town map of Fort Knox including the Godman Army Airfield and the roads and railway tracks leading into the town. The committee members on the right of the table swivelled their chairs. Goldfinger pointed to the Bullion Depository. It was down on the left-hand corner enclosed in a triangle formed by the Dixie Highway, Bullion Boulevard and Vine Grove Road. Goldfinger said, "I will show you a detailed plan of the depository in just a moment." He paused. "Now, gentlemen, allow me to point out the main features of this fairly straightforward township. Here"—he ran his finger from the top centre of the map down through the town and out beyond the Bullion Depository—"runs the line of the Illinois Central Railroad, from Louisville, thirty-five miles to the north, through the town and on to Elizabethtown eighteen miles to the south. We are not concerned with Brandenburg Station in the centre of the town, but with this complex of sidings adjoining the Bullion Vault. That is one of the loading and unloading bays for the bullion from the Mint in Washington. Other methods of transport to the vault, which are varied in no particular rotation for security reasons, are by truck convoy down the Dixie Highway or by freight plane to Godman Airfield. As you can see, the vault is isolated from these routes and stands alone without any natural cover whatsoever in the centre of approximately fifty acres of grassland. Only one road leads to the vault, a fifty-yard driveway through heavily armed gates on Bullion Boulevard. Once inside the armoured stockade, the trucks proceed on to this circular road which runs round the vault to the

rear entrance where the bullion is unloaded. That circular road, gentlemen, is manufactured out of steel plates or flaps. These plates are on hinges and in an emergency the entire steel surface of the road can be raised hydraulically to create a second internal stockade of steel. Not so obvious to the eye, but known to me, is that an underground delivery tunnel runs below the plain between Bullion Boulevard and Vine Grove Road. This serves as an additional means of access to the vault through steel doors that lead from the wall of the tunnel to the first sub-ground floor of the depository."

Goldfinger paused and stood away from the map. He looked round the table. "All right, gentlemen. There is the vault and those are the main approaches to it with the exception of its front door which is purely an entrance to the reception hall and offices. Any questions?"

There were none. All eyes were on Goldfinger, waiting. Once again the authority of his words had gripped them. This man seemed to know more about the secrets of Fort Knox than had ever been released to the outside world.

Goldfinger turned back to the blackboard and pulled down a second map over the first. This was the detailed plan of the Gold Vault. Goldfinger said, "Well, gentlemen, you can see that this is an immensely solid two-storey building somewhat like a square, two-layered cake. You will notice that the roof has been stepped for bomb protection, and you will observe the four pill boxes on the ground at the four corners. These are of steel and are connected with the interior of the building. The exterior dimensions of the vault are a hundred and five by a hundred and twenty-one feet. The height from ground level is forty-two feet. The construction is of Tennessee granite, steel-lined. The exact constituents are: sixteen thousand cubic feet of granite, four thousand cubic yards of concrete, seven hundred and fifty tons of reinforcing steel and seven hundred and sixty tons of structural steel. Right? Now, within the building, there is a two-storey steel and concrete vault divided into compartments. The vault door weighs more than twenty tons and the casing of the vault is of steel plates, steel I-beams and steel cylinders laced with hoopbands and encased in concrete. The roof is of similar construction and is independent of the roof of the building. A corridor encircles the vault at both levels and gives access both to the vault and to the offices

and storerooms that are housed in the outer wall of the building. No one person is entrusted with the combination to the door of the vault. Various senior members of the depository staff must separately dial combinations known only to each of them. Naturally the building is equipped with the latest and finest protective devices. There is a strong guard-post within the building and immensely powerful reinforcements are at all times available from the Armoured Centre less than a mile distant. Do you follow me? Now, as to the actual content of the vault—these amount, as I said earlier, to some fifteen billion dollars' worth of standard mint bars one thousand fine. Each bar is double the size of the one before you and contains four hundred Troy ounces, the avoirdupois weight being some twenty-seven and a half pounds. These are stored without wrappings in the compartments of the vault." Goldfinger glanced round the table. "And that, gentlemen and madam," he concluded flatly, "is all I can tell you, and all I think we need to know, about the nature and contents of Fort Knox Depository. Unless there are any questions at this stage, I will proceed to a brief explanation of how this depository may be penetrated and its contents seized."

There was silence. The eyes round the table were rapt, intent. Nervously, Mr Jack Strap took a medium-sized cigar out of his vest pocket and stuffed it in the corner of his mouth.

Pussy Galore said sternly, "If you set fire to that thing I swear I'll kayo you with my gold brick." She took a threatening hold of the bar.

"Take it easy, kid," said Mr Strap out of the corner of his mouth.

Mr Jed Midnight commented decisively, "Mister, if you can heist that joint, you got yourself a *summum cum laude*. Go ahead and tell. This is either a bust or the Crime de la Crime."

Goldfinger said indifferently, "Very well, gentlemen. You shall hear the plan." He paused and looked carefully round the table and into each pair of eyes in turn. "But I hope you understand that total security must now prevail. What I have said so far, if repeated, would be taken for the maunderings of a lunatic. What I am about to say will involve all of us in the greatest peace-time conspiracy in the

of the United States. May I take it that we are
bound by an oath of absolute secrecy?"
Almost instinctively, Bond watched the eyes of Mr Helmut
Springer from Detroit. While affirmatives in various tones of
voice came from the others, Mr Springer veiled his eyes.
His portentous "You have my solemn word" rang hollow.
To Bond, the candour was as false as a second-hand motor
salesman's. Casually he drew a short straight minus line
beside Mr Springer's name on the agenda.
"Very well then." Goldfinger returned to his seat at the
table. He sat down, picked up his pencil and began talking
to it in a thoughtful, conversational voice. "First, and in
some ways most difficult, is the question of disposal. One
billion dollars of gold bullion weighs approximately one
thousand tons. To transport this amount would require
one hundred ten-ton trucks or some twenty six-wheel
heavy industry road transporters. I recommend the latter
vehicles. I have a list of the charter companies who hir
out this type of vehicle and I recommend that, if we are to
be partners, you should proceed immediately after this
meeting to contracting with the relevant companies in
your territories. For obvious reasons you will all wish to
engage your own drivers and this I must leave in your
hands. No doubt"—Mr Goldfinger allowed himself the
ghost of a smile—"the Teamsters' Union will prove a
fruitful source for reliable men and you will perhaps consider
recruiting ex-drivers from the Negro Red Ball Express that
served the American armies during the war. However, these
are details requiring exact planning and co-ordination.
There will also be a traffic control problem and no doubt
you will make arrangements among yourselves for sharin
out the available roads. Transport aircraft will be a su
sidiary source of mobility and arrangements will be ma
to keep open the north-south runway on the Goddard
Airfield. Your subsequent disposal of the bullion will
course, be your own affair. For my part"—Goldfinger loo
coolly round the table—"I shall initially be using the
road and, since I have a bulkier transport problem, I
you will allow me to reserve this means of egress for
own." Goldfinger did not wait for comment. He con
in an even tone: "Compared with this problem of tra
the other arrangements will be relatively simple. T

with, on D-1, I propose to put the entire population, military and civilian, of Fort Knox temporarily out of action. Exact arrangements have been made and only await my signal. Briefly, the town is supplied with all drinking and other water-supplies by two wells and two filter plants yielding just under seven million gallons per day. These are under the control of the Post Engineer. This gentleman has been pleased to accept a visit from the Superintendent and Deputy Superintendent of the Tokyo Municipal Waterworks who wish to study the workings of a plant of this size for installation in a new suburb planned for the environs of Tokyo. The Post Engineer has been much flattered by this request and the Japanese gentlemen will be accorded all facilities. These two gentlemen, who are, of course, members of my staff, will be carrying on their persons relatively small quantities of a highly concentrated opiate devised by the German chemical warfare experts for just this purpose during the last war. This substance disseminates rapidly through a volume of water of this magnitude, and, in its consequent highly diluted form, has the effect of instant but temporary narcosis of any person drinking half a tumbler of the infected water. The symptoms are a deep and instant sleep from which the victim awakens much refreshed in approximately three days. Gentlemen—"Goldfinger held out one hand palm upwards—"in the month of June in Kentucky I consider it out of the question that a single resident is able to go through twenty-four hours without consuming half a glass of water. There may perhaps be a handful of confirmed alcoholics on their feet on D-Day, but I anticipate that we shall enter a town in which virtually the entire population has fallen into a deep sleep where they stand."

"What was that fairytale?" Miss Galore's eyes were shining with the vision.

"*Puss in Boots*," said Mr Jack Strap in a surly voice. "Go ahead, mister. This is good. How do we get into the town?"

"We come in," said Goldfinger, "on a special train that will have left New York City on the night of D-1. There will be approximately one hundred of us and we shall be attired as Red Cross workers. Miss Galore will, I hope, provide the necessary contingent of nurses. It is to fill this minor but important role that she has been invited to this meeting."

Miss Galore said enthusiastically, "Wilco, Roger, over and out! My girls'll look sweet in starch. Whaddya say, Jacko?" She leant sideways and nudged Mr Strap in the ribs.

"I say they'd look better in cement overcoats," said Mr Strap impatiently. "Whaddya have to keep on butting in for? Keep going, mister."

"At Louisville, thirty-five miles from Fort Knox, I myself and an assistant will ask to be allowed to ride in the leading diesel. We shall have delicate instruments. We shall say that it will be necessary for us to sample the air as we approach Fort Knox for, by this time, news of the mysterious affliction that has struck down the inhabitants will have reached the outer world and there is likely to be some panic in the surrounding area, and indeed in the country as a whole. Rescue planes may be expected to approach shortly after our arrival at dawn and an early task will be to *man the control tower* at Godman Airfield, declare the base closed and re-route all planes to Louisville. But, to go back for a moment, shortly after leaving Louisville, my assistant and I will dispose of the driver and fireman by as humane methods as are possible" (I bet, thought Bond) "and I shall personally bring the train—I may say that I have the requisite knowledge of these locomotives—through Fort Knox to the bullion sidings alongside the depository." Goldfinger paused. He looked with slow, grave eyes round the circle. Satisfied with what he saw, he continued in the same even tone. "By this time, gentlemen and madam, your transport convoys should be arriving. The traffic controller will dispose them in the neighbourhood of the depository according to a pre-arranged plan, the airport staff will proceed by truck to Godman Airfield and take over, and we shall enter the depository, paying no heed to the sleeping bodies with which the landscape will be—er—decorated. Right?"

Mr Solo's dark eyes burned across the table. He said softly, "Sure, is right so far. Now mebbe you—" he blew out his cheeks and gave a quick hard puff towards Goldfinger—"like this and the twenty-ton door he fall down. Yes?"

"Yes," said Goldfinger equably. "Almost exactly like that." He rose and went to the table under the blackboard, lifted up the big ungainly carton and carried it carefully back and placed it on the table in front of him. It seemed to be very heavy.

He sat down and continued, "While ten of my trained assistants are making preparations for the vault to be opened, stretcher teams will enter the depository and remove to safety as many of the inmates as can be located." Bond thought he noticed a treacherous purr underlying Goldfinger's next words. "I am sure you will all agree, gentlemen and madam, that all unnecessary loss of life should be avoided. Thus far, I hope you notice that there have been no casualties with the exception of two employees of the Illinois Central Railroad who have received sore heads." Goldfinger didn't wait for comment but went on. "Now," he reached out and placed his hand on the carton, "when you, gentlemen, and your associates have needed weapons, other than the conventional small arms, where have you found them? At military establishments, gentlemen. You have purchased sub-machine guns and other heavy equipment from quartermaster storekeepers at nearby military bases. You have achieved this by the use of pressure, blackmail or money. I have done the same. Only one weapon would be powerful enough to blast open the Bullion Vault at Fort Knox and I obtained one, after much seeking, from a certain allied military base in Germany. It cost me exactly one million dollars. This, gentlemen, is an atomic warhead designed for use with the Corporal Intermediate Range Guided Missile."

"Cheesus Kerist." Jed Midnight's hands reached for the edge of the table beside Bond and gripped it.

All the faces round the table were pale. Bond could feel the skin taut over his own tensed jaw. To break his tension he reached inside his coat pocket for the Chesterfields and lit one. He slowly blew out the flame and put the lighter back in his pocket. God Almighty! What had he got himself into? Bond looked back down the vista of his knowledge of Goldfinger. The first meeting with the naked brown body on the roof of the Floridiana Cabana Club. The casual way he had rapped Goldfinger's knuckles. The interview with M. The meeting at the bank at which it had been a question of tracking down a gold smuggler—admittedly a big one and one who worked for the Russians—but still only a man-sized criminal, someone Bond had taken trouble to beat at golf and then had pursued coolly, efficiently, but still as only one more quarry like so many others. And now! Now it was not a rabbit in the rabbit

not even a fox, it was a king cobra—the biggest, deadly inhabitant of the world! Bond sighed wearily. St George and the dragon. And St George had better a move on and do something before the dragon hatched the little dragon's egg he was now nesting so confidently. Bond smiled tautly. Do what? What in God's name was there he could do?

Goldfinger held up his hand. "Gentlemen and madam, believe me, this object is an entirely harmless lump of machinery. It is not armed. If I hit it with a hammer it would not explode. Nothing can make it explode until it is armed and that will not happen until The Day."

Mr Billy Ring's pale face was shiny with sweat. The words trembled slightly as they hissed out through the false grin. "Mister, what . . . what about this thing they call—er—fall-out?"

"Fall-out will be minimal, Mr Ring, and extremely localized. This is the latest model—the so-called 'clean' atomic bomb. But protection suits will be issued to the squad that first enters the ruins of the building. They will form the first in the human chain that will remove the gold and pass it to the waiting trucks."

"Flying debris, Mister? Chunks of concrete and steel and so forth?" Mr Midnight's voice came from somewhere in his stomach.

"We shall take shelter behind the outer steel stockade of the depository, Mr Midnight. All personnel will wear earplugs. There may be minor damage to some of the trucks but that hazard must be accepted."

"Da sleeping guys?" Mr Solo's eyes were greedy. "Me dey jess sleeps a liddle longer?" Mr Solo obviously did worry too much about the sleeping guys.

"We shall move as many as possible to safety. We are I am afraid, accept minor damage to the town. I estimate that casualties among the population will approximate equal three days' toll on the roads of Fort Knox. Our action will merely serve to keep road accident statistics at a steady level."

"Damn nice of us." Mr Midnight's nerves had recovered.

"Any more questions?" Goldfinger's voice was

He had read out the figures, estimated the prospects for the business. Now it was time to put the meeting to the vote. "Details remain to be worked out exactly. In the meantime, my staff here"—he turned first to Bond and then to Mr. Masterton—"will be assisting me. This room will be our operations room to which you will all have access by day or by night. The code word for the project is 'Operation Grand Slam', which will always be used in referring to the project. May I suggest that those of you who wish to participate should brief one, and only one, of your most trusted lieutenants. Other staff can be trained for their functions as if this were a run-of-the-mill bank robbery. On D-1 a slightly wider briefing of staff will be necessary. I know I can rely on you, gentlemen and madams, if you decide to participate, to treat this whole project as an operation of war. Inefficiency or insecurity will of course have to be dealt with decisively. And now, gentlemen and madams, I will ask you to reply on behalf of your respective organizations. Which of you wishes to enter this race? The stakes are gigantic. The risks are minimal. Mr. Midnight turned his head an inch to the right. Bond saw his X-ray gaze devour his neighbour. "Yes?" "Or no?"

Mr Solo prefaced his reply by reaching into his coat pocket and taking out a battery shaver. He switched it on. The room filled with the noise of angry bees. Mr Solo leant his head back and began running the machine thoughtfully up the right side of his face while his uptilted eyes sought decision in the ceiling. Suddenly he switched the razor off, put it down on the table in front of him and jerked his head down and forward like a snake striking. The black gun-muzzles of his eyes pointed threateningly across the table at Goldfinger and moved slowly from feature to feature of the big moon-face. Half Mr Solo's own face now looked naked. The other half was dark with the Italian swarthiness that comes from an uncontrollable beard growth. Bond guessed that he probably had to shave every three or four hours. Now Mr Solo decided to speak. He spoke in a voice that brought chill into the room. He said softly, "Mister, I been watching you. You are a very relaxed man for someone who speaks such big things. Last man I knew was so much relaxed he got himself totally relaxed by a quick burst of the chopper. Okay, okay." Mr Solo sat back. He spread open palms in reluctant surrender. "So I come in, yes. But mister—" there was a pause for emphasis—"either we get that billion or you get dead. Is okay with you?"

Goldfinger's lips bent ironically. "Thank you, Mr Solo. Your conditions are quite acceptable. I have every wish to stay alive. Mr Helmut Springer?"

Mr Springer's eyes looked deader than ever. He said pompously, "I am still giving the matter my full consideration. Pray consult my colleagues while I deliberate."

Mr Midnight commented impatiently, "Same old Hell. Waits for what he calls inspiration. He's guided—messages from the Almighty on the angels' wavelength. I guess he hasn't heard a human voice in twenty years."

"And Mr Strap?"

Mr Jack Strap crinkled his eyes at Goldfinger. He said smoothly, "Mister, I figure you know the odds and you surely pay the best since one of our machines at Vegas got the trots and gave continuous jackpots. I guess if we provide the muscles and the guns this caper'll pay off. You can count me in." Mr Strap turned off the charm. His eyes, now frightening again, turned, with Goldfinger's, to Galore.

Miss Galore veiled her violet eyes so as not to have to look at either of them. She said indifferently to the room at large, "Business ain't been so brisk in my corner of the woods." She tapped with long, silver-painted finger-nails on the gold bar before her. "Mind you, I won't say I'm overdrawn at the bank. Let's put it I'm just a shade under-deposited. Yup. Sure I'll come in. Me and my gals got to eat."

Goldfinger allowed himself a half-smile of sympathy. "That is excellent news, Miss Galore. And now," he turned to face across the table, "Mr Springer, might we ask if you have made up your mind?"

Slowly Mr Springer rose to his feet. He gave the controlled yawn of an opera goer. He followed the yawn with a small belch. He took out a fine linen handkerchief and patted his lips. His glazed eyes moved round the table and finally rested on Goldfinger. Slowly his head moved from side to side as if he was trying to exercise fibrositis in his neck muscles. He said gravely, like a bank manager refusing a loan, "Mr Gold, I fear your proposal would not find favour with my colleagues in Detroit." He gave a little bow which included everyone. "It only remains for me to thank you for a most interesting occasion. Good afternoon, gentlemen and madam." In the chilly silence, Mr Springer tucked his handkerchief carefully into the left-hand cuff of his immaculate pin-stripe, turned and walked softly to the door and let himself out.

The door closed with a sharp click. Bond noticed Goldfinger's hand slip casually below the table. He guessed that Oddjob was getting his signal. Signal for what?

Mr Midnight said nastily, "Glad he's out. He's strictly a four-ulcer man. Now then—" he got up briskly and turned to Bond—"how about a little drink?"

They all rose and gathered round the buffet. Bond found himself between Miss Pussy Galore and Tilly Masterton. He offered them champagne. Miss Galore looked at him coldly and said, "Move over, Handsome. Us girls want to talk secrets. Don't we, yummy?" Miss Masterton blushed and then turned very pale. She whispered adoringly, "Oh yes please, Miss Galore."

Bond smiled sourly at Tilly Masterton and moved down the room.

Jed Midnight had witnessed the snub. He got close to Bond and said earnestly, "Mister, if that's your doll, you better watch her. Pussy gets the girls she wants. She consumes them in bunches—like grapes, if you follow me." Mr Midnight sighed wearily. "Cheesus how they bore me, the lizzies! You'll see, she'll soon have that frail parting her hair three ways in front of the mirror."

Bond said cheerfully, "I'll watch out. There's nothing much I can do. She's an independent sort of a girl."

"That so?" said Mr Midnight with a spark of interest. "Well mebbe I can help to break it up." He straightened his tie. "I could go for that Masterton. She's sure got natural resources. See you around." He grinned at Bond and moved off down the room.

Bond was having a quiet square meal off caviar and champagne and thinking how well Goldfinger had handled the meeting when the door at the end of the room opened and one of the Koreans hurried in and went up to Goldfinger. Goldfinger bent his head to the whispered words. His face became grave. He rapped a fork on his glass of Saratoga Vichy.

"Gentlemen and madam." He looked sadly round the group. "I have received bad news. Our friend Mr Helmut Springer has met with an accident. He fell down the stairs. Death was instantaneous."

"Ho, hol!" Mr Ring's laugh was not a laugh. It was a hole in the face. "And what does that Slappy Hapgood, his torpedo, have to say about it?"

Goldfinger said gravely, "Alas, Mr Hapgood also fell down the stairs and has succumbed to his injuries."

Mr Solo looked at Goldfinger with new respect. He said softly, "Mister, you better get those stairs fixed before me and my friend Giulio come to use them."

Goldfinger said seriously, "The fault has been located. Repairs will be put in hand at once." His face grew thoughtful. "I fear these accidents may be misconstrued in Detroit."

Jed Midnight said cheerfully, "Don't give it a thought, mister. They love funerals up there. And it'll take a load off their minds. Old Hell wouldn't have lasted much longer. They been stoking the fires under him these twelve months." He appealed to Mr Strap who stood next to him. "Am I right, Jacko?"

re, Jed," said Mr Strap sagely. "You got
Helmut M. Springer had to be hit."

hit"—mobese for murder. When Bond at last got to
that night, he couldn't wipe the word out of his mind.
Oddjob had got the signal, a double ring, and Springer
his guard had got hit. There had been nothing Bond
could have done about it—even if he had wanted to, and
Mr Helmut Springer meant nothing to him, probably richly
deserved to be hit anyway—but now some 59,998 other
people were going to get hit unless he, and only he, could do
something about it.

When the meeting of paramount hoods had broken up
to go about their various duties, Goldfinger had dismissed
the girl and kept Bond in the room. He told Bond to take
notes and then for more than two hours went over the
operation down to the smallest detail. When they came to
the doping of the two reservoirs (Bond had to work out an
exact timetable to ensure that the people of Fort Knox
would all be 'under' in good time) Bond had asked for
details of the drug and its speed of action.

"You won't have to worry about that."

"Why not? Everything depends on it."
"Mr Bond." Goldfinger's eyes had a faraway, withdrawn
look. "I will tell you the truth because you will have no
opportunity of passing it on. From now, Oddjob will not
be more than a yard from your side and his orders will be
strict and exact. So I can tell you that the entire population
of Fort Knox will be dead or incapacitated by midnight
D-1. The substance that will be inserted in the water supply
outside the filter plant, will be a highly concentrated form
GB."

"You're mad! You don't really mean you're going
to kill sixty thousand people!"

"Why not? American motorists do it every two years."
Bond stared into Goldfinger's face in fascinated horror.
It couldn't be true! He couldn't mean it! He said to
himself: "What's this GB?"

"GB is the most powerful of the Trilone group of
poisons. It was perfected by the Wehrmacht in 1940
and never used for fear of reprisals. In fact, it is a more
effective instrument of destruction than the hydrogen bomb."

disadvantage lies in the difficulty of applying it to the populace. The Russians captured the entire German stocks at Dyhernfurth on the Polish frontier. Friends of mine were able to supply me with the necessary quantities. Introduction through the water supply is an ideal method of applying it to a densely populated area."

Bond said, "Goldfinger, you're a lousy, —— bastard."
"Don't be childish. We have work to do."

Later, when they had got to the problem of transporting the tons of gold out of the town, Bond had had one last try. He said, "Goldfinger, you're not going to get this stuff away. Nobody's going to get their hundred tons of gold out of the place—let alone five hundred. You'll find yourself tearing down the Dixie Highway in a truck with a few gold bars loaded with gamma rays and the American Army on your tail. And you'll have killed sixty thousand people for that? The thing's farcical. Even if you do get a ton or two away, where the hell do you think you're going to hide it?"

"Mr Bond." Goldfinger's patience was infinite. "It just happens that a Soviet cruiser of the *Sverdlovsk* class will be visiting Norfolk, Virginia, on a goodwill cruise at that time. It sails from Norfolk on D+1. Initially by train and then by transporter convoy, my gold will arrive on board the cruiser by midnight on D-Day. I shall sail in the cruiser for Kronstadt. Everything has been carefully planned, every possible hitch has been foreseen. I have lived with this operation for five years. Now the time has come for the performance. I have tidied up my activities in England and Europe. Such small debris as remains of my former life can go to the scavengers who will shortly be sniffing on my trail. I shall be gone. I shall have emigrated and, Mr Bond, I shall have taken the golden heart of America with me. Naturally"—Goldfinger was indulgent—"this unique performance will not be immaculate. There has not been enough time for rehearsals. I need these clumsy gangsters with their guns and their men, but I could not bring them into the plan until the last moment. They will make mistakes. Conceivably they will have much trouble getting their own loot away. Some will be caught, others killed. I couldn't care less. These men are amateurs who were needed, so to speak, for the crowd scenes. They are extras, Mr Bond, brought in off the streets. What happens to them after the play is of no

interest to me whatsoever. And now, on with the work. I shall need seven copies of all this by nightfall. Where were we...?"

So in fact, reflected Bond feverishly, this was not only a Goldfinger operation with SMERSH in the background. SMERSH had even got the High Praesidium to play. This was Russia versus America with Goldfinger as the spear-head! Was it an act of war to steal something from another country? But who would know that Russia had the gold? No one, if the plan went off as Goldfinger intended. None of the gangsters had an inkling. To them Goldfinger was just another of them, another gangster, slightly larger than life-size. And Goldfinger's staff, his drivers for the golden convoy to the coast? Bond himself, and Tilly Masterton? Some would be killed, including him and the girl. Some, the Koreans for instance, would no doubt sail in the cruiser. Not a trace would be left, not a witness. It was modern piracy with all the old-time trimmings. Goldfinger was sacking Fort Knox as Bloody Morgan had sacked Panama. There was no difference except that the weapons and the techniques had been brought up to date.

And there was only one man in the whole world who could stop it. But how?

The next day was an unending blizzard of paper-work. Every half-hour a note would come in from Goldfinger's operations room asking for schedules of this, copies of that, estimates, timetables, lists of stores. Another typewriter was brought in, maps, reference books—anything that Bond requisitioned. But not once did Oddjob relax the extreme care with which he opened the door to Bond's knock, not once did his watchful eyes wander from Bond's eyes, hands, feet when he came into the room to bring meals or notes or supplies. There was no question of Bond and the girl being part of the team. They were dangerous slaves and nothing else.

Tilly Masterton was equally reserved. She worked like a machine—quick, willing, accurate, but uncommunicative. She responded with cool politeness to Bond's early attempts to make friends, share his thoughts with her. By the evening, he had learnt nothing about her except that she had been a successful amateur ice-skater in between secretarial work for

Unilevers. Then she had started getting star parts in ice-shows. Her hobby had been indoor pistol and rifle shooting and she had belonged to two marksman clubs. She had few friends. She had never been in love or engaged. She lived by herself in two rooms in Earls Court. She was twenty-four. Yes, she realized that they were in a bad fix. But something would turn up. This Fort Knox business was nonsense. It would certainly go wrong. She thought Miss Pussy Galore was 'divine'. She somehow seemed to count on her to get her out of this mess. Women, with a sniff, were rather good at things that needed finesse. Instinct told them what to do. Bond was not to worry about her. She would be all right.

Bond came to the conclusion that Tilly Masterton was one of those girls whose hormones had got mixed up. He knew the type well and thought they and their male counterparts were a direct consequence of giving votes to women and 'sex equality'. As a result of fifty years of emancipation, feminine qualities were dying out or being transferred to the males. Pansies of both sexes were everywhere, not yet completely homosexual, but confused, not knowing what they were. The result was a herd of unhappy sexual misfits—barren and full of frustrations, the women wanting to dominate and the men to be nannied. He was sorry for them, but he had no time for them. Bond smiled sourly to himself as he remembered his fantasies about this girl as they sped along the valley of the Loire. Entre Deux Seins indeed!

At the end of the day, there was a final note from Goldfinger:

Five principals and myself will leave La Guardia Airport tomorrow at 11 am in chartered plane flown by my pilots for aerial survey of Grand Slam. You will accompany. Masterton will remain. G.

Bond sat on the edge of his bed and looked at the wall. Then he got up and went to the typewriter. He worked for an hour, typing, single-spaced, on both sides of the sheet, exact details of the operation. He folded the sheet, rolled it to a small cylinder about the size of his little finger and sealed it carefully with gum. Next he typed on a slip of paper:

URGENT AND VITAL. REWARD OF FIVE THOUSAND DOLLARS
IS GUARANTEED WITH NO QUESTIONS ASKED TO THE FINDER

WHO DELIVERS THIS MESSAGE UNOPENED TO FELIX LETTER CARE PINKERTON'S DETECTIVE AGENCY, 154 NASSAU STREET, NEW YORK CITY. IMMEDIATE CASH ON DELIVERY.

Bond rolled this message round the cylinder, wrote \$5,000 REWARD in red ink on the outside, and stuck the little package down the centre of three inches of Scotch tape. Then he sat down again on the edge of the bed and carefully strapped the free ends of the Scotch tape down the inside of his thigh.

CHAPTER 20

JOURNEY INTO HOLOCAUST

"MISTER, Flying Control is buzzing us. Wants to know who we are. They say this is restricted air."

Goldfinger got up from his seat and went forward into the cockpit. Bond watched him pick up the hand microphone. His voice came back clearly over the quiet hum of the ten-seater Executive Beechcraft. "Good morning. This is Mr Gold of Paramount Pictures Corporation. We are carrying out an authorized survey of the territory for a forthcoming 'A' picture of the famous Confederate raid of 1861 which resulted in the capture of General Sherman at Muldraugh Hill. Yes, that's right. Cary Grant and Elizabeth Taylor in the lead. What's that? Clearance? Sure we've got clearance. Let me see now" (Goldfinger consulted nothing) "—yes, here it is. Signed by Chief of Special Services at the Pentagon. Sure, the Commanding Officer at the Armoured Centre will have a copy. Okay and thanks. Hope you'll enjoy the picture. 'Bye.'"

Goldfinger wiped the breezy expression off his face, handed over the microphone and came back into the cabin. He braced his legs and stood looking down at his passengers. "Well, gentlemen and madam, do you think you've seen enough? I think you'll agree it's all pretty clear and conforms with your copies of the town plan. I don't want to go much

lower than six thousand. Perhaps we could make one more circuit and be off. Oddjob, get out the refreshments."

There was a mumble of comment and questions which Goldfinger dealt with one by one. Oddjob got up from Bond's side and walked down to the rear. Bond followed him and, under his hard, suspicious stare, went into the little lavatory and locked the door.

He sat down calmly and thought. There hadn't been a chance on the way down to La Guardia. He had sat with Oddjob in the back of an unobtrusive Buick saloon. The doors had been locked on them by the driver and the windows tightly closed. Goldfinger had ridden in front, the partition closed behind him. Oddjob had sat slightly sideways, his horn-ridged hands held ready on his thighs like heavy tools. He had not taken his eyes off Bond until the car had driven round the boundary to the charter hangars and come up alongside the private plane. Sandwiched between Goldfinger and Oddjob, Bond had had no alternative but to climb up the steps into the plane and take his seat with Oddjob beside him. Ten minutes later, the others had arrived. There was no communication with them except an exchange of curt greetings. They were all different now—no smart remarks, no unnecessary talk. These were men who had gone to war. Even Pussy Galore, in a black Dacron macintosh with a black leather belt, looked like some young S.S. guardsman. Once or twice in the plane she had turned and looked at Bond rather thoughtfully. But she hadn't answered his smile. Perhaps she just couldn't understand where Bond fitted in, who he was. When they got back to La Guardia there would be the same routine. It was now or never. But where? Among the leaves of lavatory paper? But they might be disturbed too soon or not for weeks. Would the ash-tray be emptied? Possibly not. But one thing would.

There was a rattle at the door-handle. Oddjob was getting restless. Perhaps Bond was setting fire to the plane. Bond called, "Coming, ape." He got up and lifted the seat. He tore the little package off the inside of his thigh and transferred it to the underside of the fore-edge of the seat. The seat would have to be lifted to get at the Elsan and that would certainly be looked to as soon as the plane got back to the hangar. The \$5000 REWARD stared back at him boldly. Not even the most hasty cleaner could miss it. So

no one preceded the cleaner. But Bond
the passengers would lift the seat. The little compart-
was too cramped to stand comfortably in. He softly
seat down, ran some water in the basin, washed his
and smoothed his hair and walked out.
djob was waiting angrily. He pushed past Bond,
d carefully round the lavatory and came out again,
ing the door. Bond walked back to his seat. Now the
s was in the bottle and the bottle had been committed
he waves. Who would be the finder? How soon?
Everyone, down to the pilot and co-pilot, went to the
asted little lavatory before they got back on the ground.
s each one came out, Bond expected to feel the cold nose
f a gun in his neck, the harsh suspicious words, the crackle
of the paper being unfolded. But at last they were back in
the Buick and speeding over the Triborough into uptown
Manhattan and then down the river on the parkway and in
through the well-guarded doors of the warehouse and back to
work.

Now it was a race—a race between Goldfinger's calm,
unhurried, efficient machine and the tiny gunpowder trail
Bond had lit. What was going on outside? During every
hour of the next three days Bond's imagination followed
what might be happening—Leiter telling his chief, the con-
ference, the quick flight down to Washington, the FBI and
Hoover, the Army, the President. Leiter insisting that Bond's
conditions be adhered to, that no suspicious moves be made,
no inquiries started, that no one moved an inch except
according to some master plan that would operate on the
day and get the whole gang into the bag so that not one of
them escaped. Would they accept Bond's conditions?
would they not dare take the chance? Had they talk
across the Atlantic with M? Had M insisted that Bo
should be somehow pulled out? No, M would see the po
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D-1.

Was that how it was going, or was it all a sham
Leiter away on another assignment. "Who is thi
What does it stand for? Some crazy loon. Hi, Smith

on this, could you? Get down to the warehouse and take a look. Sorry, mister, no five grand for you. Here's car fare back to La Guardia. Afraid you've been hoaxed."

Or, worse still, had none of these things happened? Was the plane still standing in a corner of the field, unserviced?

Night and day, the torment of thoughts went through Bond's head while the work got cleared and the hours ticked by and the deadly machine whirled quietly on. D-1 came and flashed by in a last fever of activity. Then, in the evening, came the note from Goldfinger.

First phase of operation successful. Entrain as planned at midnight. Bring copies of all maps, schedules, operation orders. G.

In close formation, with Bond and Tilly Masterton—he in a white surgeon's coat, she dressed as a nurse—wedged in the middle, the Goldfinger contingent marched swiftly through the almost empty Concourse of Pennsylvania station and down to the waiting Special. Everyone, including Goldfinger, was wearing the conventional white garb and armbands of a medical field force and the dim platform was crowded with the ghostly waiting figures of the posses from the gangs. The silence and tension was appropriate for an emergency force hurrying to the scene of a disaster, and the stretcher and decontamination suits being loaded into the compartments added drama to the scene. The Superintendent was talking quietly with the senior physicians in the shape of Midnight, Strap, Solo and Ring. Nearby stood Miss Galore with a dozen pale-faced nurses who waited with eyes bent as if they stood beside an open grave. Without makeup, their exotic hair-do's tucked into dark blue Red Cross caps, they had been well rehearsed. They were giving an excellent performance—dutiful, merciful, dedicated to the relief of human suffering.

When the Superintendent saw Goldfinger and his party approaching he hurried up. "Dr Gold?" his face was grave. "I'm afraid the news coming through isn't too good. Guess it'll all be in the papers tonight. All trains held at Louisville, no reply from the depot at Fort Knox. But we'll get you through all right. God Almighty, Doctor! What's going on down there? People coming through from Louisville are talking about the Russians spraying something from the air. Of course"—the Superintendent looked keenly at

long as no one preceded the cleaner. But Bond didn't think any of the passengers would lift the seat. The little compartment was too cramped to stand comfortably in. He softly put the seat down, ran some water in the basin, washed his face and smoothed his hair and walked out.

Oddjob was waiting angrily. He pushed past Bond, looked carefully round the lavatory and came out again, shutting the door. Bond walked back to his seat. Now the SOS was in the bottle and the bottle had been committed to the waves. Who would be the finder? How soon?

Everyone, down to the pilot and co-pilot, went to the blasted little lavatory before they got back on the ground. As each one came out, Bond expected to feel the cold nose of a gun in his neck, the harsh suspicious words, the crackle of the paper being unfolded. But at last they were back in the Buick and speeding over the Triborough into uptown Manhattan and then down the river on the parkway and in through the well-guarded doors of the warehouse and back to work.

Now it was a race—a race between Goldfinger's calm, unhurried, efficient machine and the tiny gunpowder trail Bond had lit. What was going on outside? During every hour of the next three days Bond's imagination followed what might be happening—Leiter telling his chief, the conference, the quick flight down to Washington, the FBI and Hoover, the Army, the President. Leiter insisting that Bond's conditions be adhered to, that no suspicious moves be made, no inquiries started, that no one moved an inch except according to some master plan that would operate on the day and get the whole gang into the bag so that not one of them escaped. Would they accept Bond's conditions or would they not dare take the chance? Had they talked across the Atlantic with M? Had M insisted that Bond should be somehow pulled out? No, M would see the point. He would agree that Bond's life must be disregarded. That nothing must jeopardize the big clean-up. They would have to get the two 'Japanese', of course, somehow beat out of them the code message Goldfinger would be waiting for on D-1.

Was that how it was going, or was it all a shambles? Leiter away on another assignment. "Who is this 007? What does it stand for? Some crazy loon. Hi, Smith, check

on this, could you? Get down to the warehouse and take a look. Sorry, mister, no five grand for you. Here's car fare back to La Guardia. Afraid you've been hoaxed."

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Goldfinger—"I'm not believing *that* kind of stuff. But what is Food poisoning?"

Goldfinger's face was solemn. He said in a kindly voice, "My friend, that's what we've got to find out. That's why we're being rushed down. If you want me to make a guess, I'll mark you it's only a guess, it's a form of sleeping sickness—trypanosomiasis we call it."

"That so?" the Superintendent was impressed by the sound of the malady. "Well, believe you me, Doctor, we're all mighty proud of you and your folks of the Emergency Force." He held out his hand, Goldfinger took it. "Best of luck, Doc; and now, if you'll get your men and the nurses on board, I'll have this train on its way just as quick as may be."

"Thank you, Superintendent. My colleagues and I will not forget your services." Goldfinger gave a short bow. His contingent moved on.

"Board!"

Bond found himself in a Pullman with Tilly Masterton across the aisle and the Koreans and Germans all around them. Goldfinger was in the front of the car talking cheerfully with his satraps. Miss Pussy Galore strolled by. She ignored the upturned face of Tilly Masterton but gave Bond the usual searching glance. There was a banging of doors being closed. Pussy Galore stopped and rested an arm on the back of the seat in front of Bond. She looked down at him. "Hullo, Handsome. Long time no see. Unc doesn't seem to let you off the lead much."

Bond said, "Hullo, Beautiful. That outfit suits you fine. I'm feeling rather faint. How about doing a bit of nursing?"

The deep violet eyes examined him carefully. She smiled softly, "You know what, Mister Bond? I got a feeling there's something phoney about you. I got instincts, just what are you and that doll"—she jerked her head back—"doing in this outfit?"

"We do all the work."

The train began to move. Pussy Galore straightened herself. She said, "Mebbe you do. But if any little goes wrong with this caper, for my money it'll be some who knows why. Get me?"

She didn't wait for Bond's answer, but moved on and joined the Chiefs of Staff meeting.

It was a confused, busy night. Appearances had to be kept up before the inquisitive, sympathetic eyes of the conductors. Last-minute conferences up and down the train had to wear the appearance of serious medical conclaves—no cigar smoking, no swearing, no spitting. Jealousies and competition between the gangs had to be kept under rigid control. The cold superiority of the Mafia, particularly vis-à-vis Jack Strap and his soft, easy living crowd from the West, might have led to gunplay if the chiefs hadn't been ready for trouble and constantly on the lookout for it. All these minor psychological factors had been foreseen by Goldfinger and prepared for. The women from the Cement Mixers were carefully segregated, there was no drinking and the gang chiefs kept their men occupied with further exact briefings, dummy exercises with maps and lengthy discussions about their escape plans with the gold. There was casual spying on each other's plans and Goldfinger was often called in to judge who should have which routes to the Mexican border, to the desert, to Canada. To Bond it was amazing that a hundred of the toughest crooks in America, on edge with excitement and greed, could be kept as quiet as they were. It was Goldfinger who had achieved the miracle. Apart from the calm, dangerous quality of the man, it was the minuteness of the planning and the confidence he exuded that calmed the battle nerves and created some sort of a team-spirit among the rival mobs.

As the iron gallop of the train stretched itself out through the flat lands of Pennsylvania, gradually the passengers fell into an uneasy, troubled sleep. But not Goldfinger or Oddjob. They remained awake and watchful and soon Bond gave up any idea he might have had of using one of his hidden knives on Oddjob and making a bid for freedom when the train slowed through a station or on an up-gradient.

Bond dozed fitfully, wondering, imagining, puzzling over the Superintendent's words. The Superintendent had certainly thought they were the truth, knew that Fort Knox was in emergency. Was his news from Louisville the truth or part of the giant cover plan that would be necessary to get every member of the conspiracy in the bag? If it was a cover plan, how meticulously had it been prepared? Would someone slip up? Would there be some ghastly bungle that would warn Goldfinger in time? Or if the news

was true, if the poison had been successful, what did there remain for Bond to do?

Bond had made up his mind on one score. Somehow, in the excitement of H-Hour, he would get close to Goldfinger and cut his throat with one of his hidden knives. How much would that achieve apart from an act of private vengeance? Would Goldfinger's squad accept another man's order to arm the warhead and fire it? Who would be strong enough, cool enough to take over? Mr Solo? Probably. The operation would perhaps be half successful, they would get away with plenty of gold—except Goldfinger's men who would be lost without him to lead them. And in the meantime, whatever else Bond could now do, had sixty thousand people already died? Was there anything he could have done to prevent that? Had there ever been a chance to kill Goldfinger? Would it have done any good to make a scene at Pennsylvania Station? Bond stared at his dark reflection in the window, listened to the sweet ting of the grade-crossing bells and the howl of the windhorn clearing their way, and shredded his nerves with doubts, questions, reproaches.

CHAPTER 21

THE RICHEST MAN IN HISTORY

SLOWLY THE red dawn broke over the endless plain of black grass that gradually turned to the famous Kentucky blue as the sun ironed out the shadows. At six o'clock the train began to slacken speed and soon they were gliding gently through the waking suburbs of Louisville to come to rest with a sigh of hydraulics in the echoing, almost deserted station.

A small, respectful group was awaiting them. Goldfinger, his eyes black-ringed with lack of sleep, beckoned to one of the Germans, picked up his authoritative little black bag and stepped down on to the platform. There was a short, serious conclave, the Louisville Superintendent doing the talking and Goldfinger interjecting a few questions and nodding gravely at the answers. Goldfinger turned wearily

back to the train. Mr Solo had been deputed to take his report. He stood at the open door at the end of the Pullman. Bond heard Goldfinger say sorrowfully, "I am afraid, Doctor, the situation is as bad as we feared. I will now go forward to the leading diesel with this," he held up the black bag, "and we will proceed slowly into the infected area. Would you please tell all personnel to be prepared to put on their masks? I have masks for the driver and fireman. All other railway personnel will leave the train here."

Mr Solo nodded solemnly. "Right, Professor." He closed his door. Goldfinger walked off down the platform followed by his German strong-arm man and the respectful, head-shaking group.

There was a short pause and then silently, almost reverently, the long train whispered its way out of the station leaving the little group of officials, now reinforced by four rather shamefaced conductors, with hands raised in benediction.

Thirty-five miles, half an hour, to go! Coffee and doughnuts were brought round by the nurses, and (Goldfinger thought of everything) for those whose nerves needed it, two grains of dexedrine. The nurses were pale, silent. There were no jokes, no smart remarks. The train was electric with tension.

After ten minutes there was a sudden slackening of speed and a sharp hiss from the brakes. Coffee was spilled. The train almost stopped. Then there was a jerk and it gathered speed again. A new hand had taken over on the dead man's handle.

A few minutes later, Mr Strap came hurrying through the train. "Ten minutes to go! On your toes, folks! Squads A, B and C get their equipment on. Everything's going fine. Stay calm. Remember your duties." He hurried through to the next compartment and Bond heard the voice repeating its message.

Bond turned to Oddjob. "Listen, you ape, I'm going to the lavatory and probably Miss Masterton will too." He turned to the girl. "What about it, Tilly?"

"Yes," she said indifferently, "I suppose I'd better."

Bond said, "Well, go ahead."

The Korean beside the girl looked inquiringly at Oddjob. Oddjob shook his head.

Bond said, "Unless you leave her alone I'm going to

start a fight. Goldfinger won't like that." He turned to the girl. "Go ahead, Tilly. I'll see to these apes."

Oddjob uttered a series of barks and snarls which the other Korean seemed to understand. The guard got up and said, "Okay, but not locking the door." He followed the girl down the Pullman and stood and waited for her to come out.

Oddjob carried out the same routine with Bond. Once inside, Bond took off his right shoe, slid out the knife and slipped it down inside the waist-band of his trousers. One shoe would now have no heel, but no one was going to notice that this morning. Bond washed himself. The face in the mirror was pale and the blue-grey eyes dark with tension. He went out and back to his seat.

Now there was a distant shimmer away to the right and a hint of low buildings rising like a mirage in the early morning ground mist. They slowly defined themselves as hangars with a squat control tower. Godman Field! The soft pounding howl of the train slackened. Some trim modern villas, part of a new housing development, slid by. They seemed to be unoccupied. Now, on the left, there was the black ribbon of Brandenburg Station Road. Bond craned. The gleaming modern sprawl of Fort Knox looked almost soft in the light mist. Above its jagged outline the air was clear as crystal—not a trace of smoke, no breakfasts cooking! The train slowed to a canter. On Station Road there had been a bad motor accident. Two cars seemed to have met head on. The body of a man sprawled half out of a smashed door. The other car lay on its back like a dead beetle. Bond's heart pounded. The main signal box came and went. Over the levers something white was draped. It was a man's shirt. Inside the shirt the body hung down, its head below the level of the window. A row of modern bungalows. A body clad in singlet and trousers flat on its face in the middle of a trim lawn. The lines of mown grass were beautifully exact until, near the man, the mower had written an ugly flourish and had then come to rest on its side in the newly turned earth of the border. A line of washing that had broken when the woman had grasped it. The woman lay in a white pile at one end of the sagging string of family underclothes, cloths and towels. And now the train was moving at walking pace into the town and everywhere,

down every street, on every sidewalk, there were the sprawling figures—singly, in clumps, in rocking-chairs on the porches, in the middle of intersections where the traffic lights still unhurriedly ticked off their coloured signals, in cars that had managed to pull up and in others that had smashed into shop windows. Death! Dead people everywhere. No movement, no sound save the click of the murderer's iron feet as his train slid through the graveyard.

Now there was bustle in the carriages. Billy Ring came through grinning hugely. He stopped by Bond's chair. "Oh boy!" he said delightedly, "old Goldie certainly slipped them the Micky Finn! Too bad some people were out for a ride when they got hit. But you know what they say about omelettes: can't make 'em without you break some eggs, right?"

Bond smiled tightly. "That's right."

Billy Ring made his silent O of a laugh and went on his way.

The train trundled through Brandenburg Station. Now there were scores of bodies—men, women, children, soldiers. The platform was scribbled with them, faces upwards to the roof, down in the dust, cradled sideways. Bond searched for movement, for an inquisitive eye, for a twitching hand. Nothing! Wait! What was that? Thinly through the closed window there came a soft, mewling wail. Three perambulators stood against the ticket office, the mothers collapsed beside them. Of course! The babies in the perambulators would have drunk milk, not the deadly water.

Oddjob got to his feet. So did the whole of Goldfinger's team. The faces of the Koreans were indifferent, unchanged, only their eyes flickered constantly like nervous animals. The Germans were pale, grim. Nobody looked at anyone else. Silently they filed towards the exit and lined up, waiting.

Tilly Masterton touched Bond's sleeve. Her voice trembled. "Are you sure they're only asleep? I thought I saw some sort of . . . sort of froth on some of the lips."

Bond had seen the same thing. The froth had been pink. He said, "I expect some of them were eating sweets or something when they fell asleep. You know what these Americans are—always chewing something." He softly mouthed the next words. "Stay away from me. There may be shooting." He looked hard at her to see she understood.

She nodded dumbly, not looking at him. She whispered

out of the corner of her mouth, "I'm going to get near Pussy. She'll look after me."

Bond gave her a smile and said "Good", encouragingly.

The train clicked slowly over some points and slid to rest. There came one blast of the diesel's windhorn. The doors swung open and the different groups piled out on to the platform of the Bullion Depository siding.

Now everything went with military precision. The various squads formed up in their battle order—first an assault group with sub-machine guns, then the stretcher-bearers to get the guard and other personnel out of the vault (surely an unnecessary refinement now, thought Bond) then Goldfinger's demolition team—ten men with their bulky tarpaulin-covered package—then a mixed group of spare drivers and traffic-control men, then the group of nurses, now all armed with pistols, who were to stay in the background with a heavily armed reserve group that was to deal with any unexpected interference from anybody who, as Goldfinger had put it, "might wake up".

Bond and the girl had been included in the Command Group which consisted of Goldfinger, Oddjob and the five gang leaders. They were to be stationed on the flat roofs of the two diesel locomotives which now stood, as planned, beyond the siding buildings and in full view of the objective and its approaches. Bond and the girl were to handle the maps, the timetables and the stop-watch, and Bond was to watch out for fumbles and delays and bring them at once to Goldfinger's attention to be rectified by walkie-talkie with the squad leaders. When the bomb was due to be fired, they would take shelter behind the diesels.

There came a double blast from the windhorn and, as Bond and the girl climbed to their position on the roof of the first diesel, the assault squad, followed by the other sections, doubled across the twenty yards of open ground between the railway and Bullion Boulevard. Bond edged as close as he could to Goldfinger. Goldfinger had binoculars to his eyes. His mouth was close to the microphone strapped to his chest. But Oddjob stood between them, a solid mountain of flesh, and his eyes, uninterested in the drama of the assault, never flickered from Bond and the girl.

Bond, under cover of scanning his plastic map-case and keeping an eye on the stop-watch, measured inches and

angles. He glanced at the next-door group of the four men and the woman. They were gazing, in frozen attention, at the scene before them. Now Jack Strap said excitedly, "They're through the first gates." Bond, putting half his mind to work on his own plans, took a quick look at the battlefield.

It was an extraordinary scene. In the centre stood the huge squat mausoleum, the sun glinting off the polished granite of its walls. Outside the big open field in which it stood, the roads—the Dixie Highway, Vine Grove and Bullion Boulevard—were lined with trucks and transporters two deep with the recognition flags of the gangs flying from the first and last vehicle of each convoy. Their drivers lay piled up outside the shelter of the surrounding guard wall of the vault while, through the main gate, poured the tidy disciplined squads from the train. Outside this world of movement there was absolute stillness and silence as if the rest of America was holding its breath at the committal of this gigantic crime. And outside lay the bodies of the soldiers, sprawling where they had fallen—the sentries by their pill boxes, still clutching their automatic pistols, and, inside the protecting wall, two ragged squads of soldiers in battledress. They lay in vague, untidy heaps, some bodies athwart or on top of their neighbours. Outside, between Bullion Boulevard and the main gate, two armoured cars had crashed into each other and now stood locked, their heavy machine guns pointing, one at the ground and the other at the sky. A driver's body sprawled out of the turret of one of the vehicles.

Desperately Bond looked for a sign of life, a sign of movement, a hint that all this was a careful ambush. Nothing! Not a cat moved, not a sound came out of the crowded buildings that formed a backdrop to the scene. Only the squads hurried about their tasks or now stood waiting in their planned dispositions.

Goldfinger spoke quietly into his microphone. "Last stretcher out. Bomb squad ready. Prepare to take cover."

Now the covering troops and the stretcher-bearers were hurrying for the exit, getting down under cover of the guard wall. There would be five minutes' delay to clear the area before the bomb squad, now waiting bunched at the main gate, would go in.

Bond said efficiently, "They're a minute ahead of time."

Goldfinger looked past Oddjob's shoulder. The pale eyes were aflame. They stared into Bond's. Goldfinger's mouth twisted into a harsh snarl. He said through his teeth, "You see, Mr Bond. You were wrong and I was right. Ten more minutes and I shall be the richest man in the world, the richest man in history! What do you say to that?" His mouth spat out the words.

Bond said equably, "I'll tell you after those ten minutes are up."

"Will you?" said Goldfinger. "Maybe." He looked at his watch and spoke rapidly into his microphone. The Goldfinger squad loped slowly through the main gate, their heavy burden slung from four shoulders in a cradle of webbing.

Goldfinger looked past Bond at the group on the roof of the second diesel. He called out triumphantly, "Another five minutes, gentlemen, and then we must take cover." He turned his eyes on Bond and added softly, "And then we will say goodbye, Mr Bond. And thank you for the assistance you and the girl have given me."

Out of the corner of his eye, Bond saw something moving—moving in the sky. It was a black, whirling speck. It reached the top of its trajectory, paused and then came the ear-splitting crack of a maroon signal.

Bond's heart leapt. A quick glance showed him the ranks of dead soldiers springing to life, the machine guns on the locked armoured cars swinging to cover the gates. A loud-speaker roared from nowhere, "Stand where you are. Lay down your arms." But there came a futile crackle of fire from one of the rearguard covering party and then all hell broke loose.

Bond seized the girl round the waist and jumped with her. It was a tenfoot drop to the platform. Bond broke his fall with his left hand and hoisted the girl to her feet with a jerk of his hip. As he began to run, close to the train for cover, he heard Goldfinger shout, "Get them and kill them." A splatter of lead from Goldfinger's automatic whipped at the cement to his left. But Goldfinger would have to shoot left handed. It was Oddjob that Bond feared. Now, as Bond tore down the platform with the girl's hand in his, he heard the lightning scuffle of the running feet.

The girl's hand tugged at him. She screamed angrily, "No, No. Stop! I want to stay close to Pussy. I'll be safe with her."

Bond shouted back, "Shut up, you little fool! Run like hell!" But now she was dragging at him, checking his speed. Suddenly she tore her hand out of his and made to dart into an open Pullman door. Christ, thought Bond, that's torn it! He whipped the knife out of his belt and swirled to meet Oddjob.

Ten yards away Oddjob hardly paused in his rush. One hand whipped off his ridiculous, deadly hat, a glance to take aim and the black steel half-moon sang through the air. Its edge caught the girl exactly at the nape of the neck. Without a sound she fell backwards on to the platform in Oddjob's path. The hurdle was just enough to put Oddjob off the flying high kick he had started to launch at Bond's head. He turned the kick into a leap, his left hand cutting the air towards Bond like a sword. Bond ducked and struck upwards and sideways with his knife. It got home somewhere near the ribs but the momentum of the flying body knocked the knife out of his hand. There was a tinkle on the platform. Now Oddjob was coming back at him, apparently unharmed, his hands outstretched and his feet splayed back ready for another leap or a kick. His blood was up. The eyes were red and there was a fleck of saliva at the open, panting mouth.

Above the boom and rattle of the guns outside the station, three blasts sounded on the diesel's windhorn. Oddjob snarled angrily and leapt. Bond dived at full length sideways. Something hit him a gigantic blow on the shoulder and sent him sprawling. Now, he thought as he hit the ground, now the death stroke! He scrambled clumsily to his feet, his neck hunched into his shoulders to break the impact. But no blow came and Bond's dazed eyes took in the figure of Oddjob flying away from him up the platform.

Already the leading diesel was on the move. Oddjob got to it and leapt for the footplate. For a moment he hung, his legs scrabbling for a foothold. Then he had disappeared into the cabin and the huge streamlined engine gathered speed.

Behind Bond the door of the quartermaster's office burst open. There was the hammer of running feet and a yell

"Santiago!"—St James, the battle-cry of Cortez that Leiter had once jokingly allotted to Bond.

Bond swivelled. The straw-haired Texan, clad in his wartime Marine Corps battledress, was pounding up the platform followed by a dozen men in khaki. He carried a one-man bazooka by the steel hook he used for a right hand. Bond ran to meet him. He said, "Don't shoot my fox, you bastard. Give over." He snatched the bazooka out of Leiter's hand and threw himself down on the platform, splaying out his legs. Now the diesel was two hundred yards away and about to cross the bridge over the Dixie Highway. Bond shouted "Stand clear!" to get the men out of line of the recoil flash, clicked up the safe and took careful aim. The bazooka shuddered slightly and the ten-pound armour-piercing rocket was on its way. There was a flash and a puff of blue smoke. Some bits of metal flew off the rear of the flying engine. But then it had crossed the bridge and taken the curve and was away.

"Not bad for a rookie," commented Leiter. "May put the rear diesel out, but those jobs are twins and he can make it on the forward engine."

Bond got to his feet. He smiled warmly into the hawk-like, slate-grey eyes. "You bungling oaf," he said sarcastically, "why in hell didn't you block that line?"

"Listen, shamus. If you've got any complaints about the stage management you can tell them to the President. He took personal command of this operation and it's a honey. There's a spotter plane overhead now. They'll pick up the diesel and we'll have old Goldilocks in the hoosegow by midday. How were we to know he was going to stay aboard the train?" He broke off and thumped Bond between the shoulderblades. "Hell, I'm glad to see you. These men and I were detailed off to give you protection. We've been dodging around looking for you and getting shot at by both sides for our pains." He turned to the soldiers. "Ain't that right, men?"

They laughed. "Sure is, Cap'n."

Bond looked affectionately at the Texan with whom he had shared so many adventures. He said seriously, "Bless you, Felix. You've always been good at saving my life. It was darn nearly too late this time. I'm afraid Tilly Masterton's had it." He walked off up the train with Felix at his heels.

The little figure still lay sprawled where she had fallen. Bond knelt beside her. The broken-doll angle of the head was enough. He felt for her pulse. He got up. He said softly, "Poor little bitch. She didn't think much of men." He looked defensively at Leiter. "Felix, I could have got her away if she'd only followed me."

Leiter didn't understand. He put his hand on Bond's arm and said, "Sure kid. Take it easy." He turned to his men. "Two of you carry the girl into the QM's office over there. O'Brien, you go for the ambulance. When you've done that, stop over at the Command post and give 'em the facts. Say we've got Commander Bond and I'll bring him right over."

Bond stood and looked down at the little empty tangle of limbs and clothes. He saw the bright, proud girl with the spotted handkerchief round her hair in the flying TR3. Now she had gone.

High up over his head a whirling speck soared into the sky. It reached the top of its flight and paused. There came the sharp crack of the maroon. It was the cease-fire.

CHAPTER 22

THE LAST TRICK

IT WAS two days later. Felix Leiter was weaving the black Studillac fast through the lanes of dawdling traffic on the Triborough bridge. There was plenty of time to catch Bond's plane, the evening BOAC Monarch to London, but Leiter enjoyed shaking up Bond's low opinion of American cars. Now the steel hook that he used for a right hand banged the gear lever into second and the low black car leapt for a narrow space between a giant refrigerator truck and a mooning Oldsmobile whose rear window was almost obscured by holiday stickers.

Bond's body jerked back with the kick of the 300 b.h.p. and his teeth snapped shut. When the manoeuvre was completed, and the angry hooting had vanished behind them, Bond said mildly, "It's time you graduated out of the Kiddi-

car class and bought yourself an express carriage. You want to get cracking. This pedalling along ages one. One of these days you'll stop moving altogether and when you stop moving is when you start to die."

Leiter laughed. He said, "See that green light ahead? Bet I can make it before it goes red." The car leapt forward as if it had been kicked. There was a brief hiatus in Bond's life, an impression of snipe-like flight and of a steel wall of cars that somehow parted before the whiplash of Leiter's triple klaxons, a hundred yards when the speedometer touched ninety and they were across the lights and cruising genteelly along in the centre lane.

Bond said calmly, "You meet the wrong traffic cop and that Pinkerton card of yours won't be good enough. It isn't so much that you drive slowly, it's holding back the cars behind they'll book you for. The sort of car you need is a nice elderly Rolls Royce Silver Ghost with big plate-glass windows so you can enjoy the beauties of nature"—Bond gestured towards a huge automobile junk heap on their right. "Maximum fifty and it can stop and even go backwards if you want to. Bulb horn. Suit your sedate style. Matter of fact there should be one on the market soon—Goldfinger's. And by the same token, what the hell's happened to Goldfinger? Haven't they caught up with him yet?"

Leiter glanced at his watch and edged into the outside lane. He brought the car down to forty. He said seriously, "Tell you the truth, we're all a bit worried. The papers are needling us, or rather Edgar Hoover's crowd, like hell. First they had a gripe at the security clamp-down on you. We couldn't tell them that wasn't our fault and that someone in London, an old limey called M, had insisted on it. So they're getting their own back. Say we're dragging our feet and so forth. And I'm telling you, James"—Leiter's voice was glum, apologetic—"we just haven't a clue. They caught up with the diesel. Goldfinger had fixed the controls at thirty and had let it run on down the line. Somewhere he and the Korean had got off and probably this Galore girl and the four hoods as well because they've vanished too. We found his truck convoy, of course, waiting on the east-bound highway out of Elizabethville. But never a driver. most probably scattered, but somewhere there's Goldfinger

and a pretty tough team hiding up. They didn't get to the *Sverdlovsk* cruiser at Norfolk. We had a plain-clothes guard scattered round the docks and they report that she sailed to schedule without any strangers going aboard. Not a cat's been near that warehouse on East River and no one's shown at Idlewild or the frontiers—Mexico and Canada. For my money, that Jed Midnight has somehow got them out to Cuba. If they'd taken two or three trucks from the convoy and driven like hell they could have got down to Florida, somewhere like Daytona Beach, by the early hours of D+1. And Midnight's darn well organized down there. The Coast Guards and the Air Force have put out all they've got, but nothing's shown yet. But they could have hidden up during the day and got over to Cuba during the night. It's got everybody worried as hell and it's no help that the President's hopping mad."

Bond had spent the previous day in Washington treading the thickest, richest red carpet. There had been speeches at the Bureau of the Mint, a big brass lunch at the Pentagon, an embarrassing quarter of an hour with the President, and the rest of the day had been hard work with a team of stenographers in Edgar Hoover's suite of offices with a colleague of Bond's from Station A sitting in. At the end of that, there had been a brisk quarter of an hour's talk with M on the Embassy transatlantic scrambler. M had told him what had been happening on the European end of the case. As Bond had expected, Goldfinger's cable to Universal Export had been treated as emergency. The factories at Reculver and Coppet had been searched and extra evidence of the gold smuggling racket had been found. The Indian Government had been warned about the Mecca plane that was already en route for Bombay and that end of the operation was on the way to being cleaned up. The Swiss Special Brigade had quickly found Bond's car and had got on to the route by which Bond and the girl had been taken to America, but there, at Idlewild, the FBI had lost the scent. M seemed pleased with the way Bond had handled Operation Grand Slam, but he said the Bank of England were worrying him about Goldfinger's twenty million pounds in gold. Goldfinger had assembled all this at the Paragon Safe Deposit Co in New York but had withdrawn it on D-1. He and his men had

driven it away in a covered truck. The Bank of England had ready an Order in Council to impound the gold when it was found and there would then be a case to prove that it had been smuggled out of England, or at least that it was originally smuggled gold whose value had been increased by various doubtful means. But this was now being handled by the US Treasury and the FBI and, since M had no jurisdiction in America, Bond had better come home at once and help tidy things up. Oh yes—at the end of the conversation M's voice had sounded gruff—there had been a very kind request to the PM that Bond should be allowed to accept the American Medal of Merit. Of course M had had to explain via the PM that the Service didn't go in for those sort of things—particularly from foreign countries, however friendly they were. Too bad, but M knew that this was what Bond would have expected. He knew the rules. Bond had said yes of course and thank you very much and he'd take the next plane home.

Now, as they motored quietly down the Van Wyck Expressway, Bond was feeling vaguely dissatisfied. He didn't like leaving ragged ends to a case. None of the big gangsters had been put in the bag and he had failed in the two tasks he had been given, to get Goldfinger and get Goldfinger's bullion. It was nothing but a miracle that Operation Grand Slam had been broken. It had been two days before the Beechcraft had been serviced and the cleaner who found the note had got to Pinkerton's only half an hour before Leiter was due to go off to the Coast on a big racing scandal. But then Leiter had really got cracking—to his chief, then to the FBI and the Pentagon. The FBI's knowledge of Bond's record, plus contact with M through the Central Intelligence Agency, had been enough to get the whole case up to the President within an hour. After that it had just been a case of building up the gigantic bluff in which all the inhabitants of Fort Knox had participated in one way or another. The two 'Japanese' had been taken easily enough and it was confirmed by Chemical Warfare that the three pints of GB carried as gin in their briefcases would have been enough to slay the entire population of Fort Knox. The two men had been quickly and forcibly grilled into explaining the form of the all clear cable to Goldfinger. The cable had been sent. Then the Army had

declared emergency. Road and rail and air blocks had turned back all traffic to the Fort Knox area with the exception of the gangster convoys which had not been hindered. The rest was play-acting right down to the pink froth and the squalling babies which it was thought would add nice touches of verisimilitude.

Yes, it had all been very satisfactory so far as Washington was concerned, but what about the English end? Who in America cared about the Bank of England's gold? Who cared that two English girls had been murdered in the course of this business? Who really minded that Goldfinger was still at liberty now that America's bullion was safe again?

They idled across the drab plain of Idlewild, past the ten-million-dollar steel and cement skeletons that would one day be an adult airport, and pulled up outside the makeshift huddle of concrete boxes that Bond knew so well. Already the well mannered iron voices were reaching out to them. "Pan American World Airways announces the departure of its President Flight PA 100", "Trans-world Airways calling Captain Murphy. Captain Murphy, please." And the pear-shaped vowels and fluted diction of BOAC, "BOAC announces the arrival of its Bermudan Flight BA 491. Passengers will be disembarking at gate number neyne."

Bond took his bag and said goodbye to Leiter. He said, "Well, thanks for everything, Felix. Write to me every day."

Leiter gripped his hand hard. He said, "Sure thing, kid. And take it easy. Tell that old bastard M to send you back over soon. Next visit we'll take some time off from the razzmatazz. Time you called in on my home state. Like to have you meet my oil-well. 'Bye now."

Leiter got into his car and accelerated away from the arrival bay. Bond raised his hand. The Studillac dry-skidded out on to the approach road. There was an answering glint from Leiter's steel hook out of the window and he was gone.

Bond sighed. He picked up his bag and walked in and over to the BOAC ticket counter.

Bond didn't mind airports so long as he was alone in them. He had half an hour to wait and he was quite content to wander through the milling crowds, have a bourbon and soda at the restaurant and spend some time choosing

something to read at the bookstore. He bought Ben Hogan's *Modern Fundamentals of Golf* and the latest Raymond Chandler and sauntered along to the Souvenir Shop to see if he could find an amusing gimmick to take back to his secretary.

Now there was a man's voice on the BOAC announcing system. It called out a long list of Monarch passengers who were required at the ticket counter. Ten minutes later Bond was paying for one of the latest and most expensive ball-point pens when he heard his own name being called. "Will Mr James Bond, passenger on BOAC Monarch flight No 510 to Gander and London, please come to the BOAC ticket counter. Mr James Bond, please." It was obviously that infernal tax form to show how much he had earned during his stay in America. On principle Bond never went to the Internal Revenue Office in New York to get clearance and he had only once had to argue it out at Idlewild. He went out of the shop and across to the BOAC counter. The official said politely, "May I see your health certificate, please, Mr Bond?"

Bond took the form out of his passport and handed it over.

The man looked at it carefully. He said, "I'm very sorry, sir, but there's been a typhoid case at Gander and they're insisting that all transit passengers who haven't had their shots in the last six months should be topped up. It's most annoying, sir, but Gander's very touchy about these things. Too bad we couldn't have managed a direct flight, but there's a strong head-wind."

Bond hated inoculations. He said irritably, "But look here, I'm stuffed with shots of one kind or another. Been having them for twenty years for one damned thing or another!" He looked round. The area near the BOAC departure gate seemed curiously deserted. He said, "What about the other passengers? Where are they?"

"They've all agreed, sir. Just having their shots now. It won't take a minute, sir, if you'll come this way."

"Oh well." Bond shrugged his shoulders impatiently. He followed the man behind the counter and through a door to the BOAC station manager's office. There was the usual white-clothed doctor, a mask over the bottom of his face, the needle held ready. "Last one?" he asked of the BOAC official.

"Yes, Doctor."

"Okay. Coat off and left sleeve up, please. Too bad they're so sensitive up at Gander."

"Damned sight too bad," said Bond. "What are they afraid of? Spreading the black death?"

There came the sharp smell of the alcohol and the jab of the needle.

"Thanks," said Bond gruffly. He pulled down his sleeve and made to pick his coat up from the back of the chair. His hand went down for it, missed it, went on down, down towards the floor. His body dived after the hand, down, down, down...

All the lights were on in the plane. There seemed to be plenty of spare places. Why did he have to get stuck with a passenger whose arm was hogging the central arm-rest. Bond made to get up and change his seat. A wave of nausea swept over him. He closed his eyes and waited. How extraordinary! He was never air-sick. He felt the cold sweat on his face. Handkerchief. Wipe it off. He opened his eyes again and looked down at his arms. The wrists were bound to the arms of his chair. What had happened? He had had his shot and then passed out or something. Had he got violent? What the hell was all this about? He glanced to his right and then stared aghast. Oddjob was sitting there. Oddjob! Oddjob in BOAC uniform!

Oddjob glanced indifferently at him and reached for the steward's bell. Bond heard the pretty ding-dong back in the pantry. There was the rustle of a skirt beside him. He looked up. It was Peggy Galore, trim and fresh in the fine uniform of a stewardess! She said, "Hi, Handsome!" She gave him the deep, searching look he remembered so well from when? From centuries ago, in another life.

Bond said desperately, "For Christ's sake, what's going on? Where did you come from?"

The girl smiled cheerfully, "Eating caviar and champagne. You Britishers sure live the life of ~~the~~ ~~rich~~ ~~and~~ ~~you~~ ~~get~~ ~~up~~ ~~twenty~~ ~~thousand~~ ~~feet~~. Not a sign of a sprout and if there's tea I haven't got ~~any~~ ~~more~~ ~~time~~ ~~to~~ ~~spare~~. Now, you take it easy. Uncle wants to ~~be~~ ~~in~~ ~~the~~ ~~plane~~ ~~and~~ ~~he~~ ~~is~~ ~~waiting~~ ~~for~~ ~~you~~ ~~and~~ ~~he~~ ~~is~~ ~~in~~ ~~the~~ ~~cockpit~~ ~~door~~ sauntered up the aisle, swinging her ~~bag~~ ~~and~~ ~~her~~ ~~bag~~ ~~and~~ ~~her~~ ~~bag~~ through the cockpit door.

Now nothing could surprise Bond. Goldfinger, in a BOAC captain's uniform that was rather too large for him, the cap squarely on the centre of his head, closed the cockpit door behind him and came down the aisle.

He stood and looked grimly down at Bond. "Well, Mr Bond. So Fate wished us to play the game out. But this time, Mr Bond, there cannot possibly be a card up your sleeve. Ha!" The sharp bark was a mixture of anger, stoicism and respect. "You certainly turned out to be a snake in my pastures." The great head shook slowly. "Why I kept you alive! Why I didn't crush you like a beetle! You and the girl were useful to me. Yes, I was right about that. But I was mad to have taken the chance. Yes, mad." The voice dropped and went slow. "And now tell me, Mr Bond. How did you do it? How did you communicate?"

Bond said equably, "We will have a talk, Goldfinger. And I will tell you certain things. But not until you have taken off these straps and brought me a bottle of bourbon, ice, soda water and a packet of Chesterfields. Then, when you have told me what I wish to know, I will decide what to tell you. As you say, my situation is not favourable, or at least it doesn't appear to be. So I have nothing to lose and if you want to get something out of me it will be on my own terms."

Goldfinger looked gravely down. "I have no objection to your conditions. Out of respect for your abilities as an opponent, you shall spend your last journey in comfort. Oddjob"—the voice was sharp. "Ring the bell for Miss Galore and undo those straps. Get into the seat in front. There is no harm he can do at the rear of the plane but he is not to approach the cockpit door. If need be, kill him at once, but I prefer to get him to our destination alive. Understood?"

"Arrgh."

Five minutes later Bond had what he wanted. The tray in front of him was down and on it were his whisky and cigarettes. He poured himself a stiff bourbon. Goldfinger was seated in the chair across the aisle, waiting. Bond picked up his drink and sipped it. He was about to take a deeper drink when he saw something. He put the glass carefully down without disturbing the little round paper coaster that had stuck to the bottom of his glass. He lit a cigarette,

crew of this plane and the passengers were given the necessary injections from which they will now be recovering. We changed clothes with the unconscious crew, the bullion was loaded on the plane, you were dealt with and carried out on a stretcher and in due course the new BOAC crew, with their stewardess, boarded the plane and we took to the air."

Goldfinger paused. He lifted a hand resignedly. "Of course there were small hitches. We were told to 'follow taxiway Alpha to runway four', and it was only by following a KLM plane that we were successful. The Idlewild routine was not easy to master and we must have seemed somewhat clumsy and inexperienced, but, Mr Bond, with assurance, strong nerves and a gruff, intimidating manner it is never difficult to override the Civil Service mentality of what, after all, are minor employees. I understand from the wireless operator that a search for this plane is under way. They were already questioning us before we were out of VHF range at Nantucket. Then the Distant Early Warning system queried us on high frequency. That did not disturb me. We have enough fuel. We have already had clearance from Moscow for East Berlin, Kiev or Murmansk. We shall take whichever route the weather dictates. There should be no trouble. If there is, I shall talk my way out of it on the radio. No one is going to shoot down a valuable BOAC plane. The mystery and confusion will protect us until we are well within Soviet territory and then, of course, we shall have disappeared without trace."

To Bond there had been nothing fantastic, nothing impossible about Goldfinger since he had heard the details of Operation Grand Slam. The theft of a Stratocruiser, as Goldfinger had explained it, was preposterous, but no more so than his methods of smuggling gold, his purchase of an atomic warhead. When one examined these things, while they had a touch of magic, of genius even, they were logical exercises. They were bizarre only in their magnitude. Even the tiny manoeuvre of cheating Mr Du Pont had been quite brilliantly contrived. There was no doubt about it, Goldfinger was an artist—a scientist in crime as great in his field as Cellini or Einstein in theirs.

"And now, Mr Bond of the British Secret Service, we made a bargain. What have you to tell me? Who put you on to me? What did they suspect? How did you manage to

interfere with my plans?" Goldfinger sat back, placed his hands across his stomach and looked at the ceiling.

Bond gave Goldfinger a censored version of the truth. He mentioned nothing about SMERSH or the location of the postbox and he said nothing about the secrets of the Homer, a device that might be new to the Russians. He concluded, "So you see, Goldfinger, you only just got away. But for Tilly Masterton's intervention at Geneva, you'd have been in the bag by now. You'd be sitting picking your teeth in a Swiss prison waiting to be sent to England. You underestimate the English. They may be slow, but they get there. You think you'll be pretty safe in Russia? I wouldn't be too sure. We've got people even out of there before now. I'll give you one last aphorism for your book, Goldfinger: 'Never go a bear of England.'"

CHAPTER 23

T.L.C. TREATMENT

THE PLANE throbbed on, high above the weather, over the great moonlit landscape. The lights had been turned out. Bond sat quietly in the darkness and sweated with fear at what he was going to do.

An hour before, the girl had brought him dinner. There was a pencil hidden in the napkin. She had made some tough remarks for the benefit of Oddjob and gone away. Bond had eaten some scraps of food and drunk a good deal of bourbon while his imagination hunted round the plane wondering what he could conceivably do to force an emergency landing at Gander or somewhere else in Nova Scotia. As a last resort, could he set fire to the plane? He toyed with the idea, and with the possibility of forcing the entrance hatch open. Both ideas seemed ~~impossible~~ and suicidal. To save him the trouble of ~~pondering over~~ them, the man whom Bond had seen ~~before at the BOAC~~ ticket counter, one of the Germans, ~~came through and stopped~~ by Bond's chair.

He grinned down at Bond. "BOAC takes good care of you, isn't it? Mister Goldfinger thinks you might have foolish notions. I am to keep an eye on the rear of the plane. So just sit back and enjoy the ride, isn't it?"

When Bond didn't answer, the man went on back to the rear section.

Something was nagging at Bond's mind, something connected with his previous thoughts. That business about forcing the hatch. Now what was it that had happened to that plane, flying over Persia back in '57? Bond sat for a while and stared with wide, unseeing eyes at the back of the seat in front of him. It might work! It just conceivably might!

Bond wrote on the inside of the napkin, *'I'll do my best. Fasten your seat belt. XXX.J.'*

When the girl came to take his tray Bond dropped the napkin and then picked it up and handed it to her. He held her hand and smiled up into the searching eyes. She bent to pick up the tray. She kissed him quickly on the cheek. She straightened herself. She said toughly, "I'll see you in my dreams, Handsome," and went off to the galley.

And now Bond's mind was made up. He had worked out exactly what had to be done. The inches had been measured, the knife from his heel was under his coat and he had twisted the longest end of his seat belt round his left wrist. All he needed was one sign that Oddjob's body was turned away from the window. It would be too much to expect Oddjob to go to sleep, but at least he could make himself comfortable. Bond's eyes never left the dim profile he could see reflected in the Perspex oblong of the window of the seat in front, but Oddjob sat stolidly under the reading light he had prudently kept burning, his eyes staring at the ceiling, his mouth slightly open and his hands held ready and relaxed on the arms of his chair.

One hour, two hours. Bond began to snore, rhythmically, drowsily, he hoped hypnotically. Now Oddjob's hands had moved to his lap. The head nodded once and pulled itself up, shifted to get more comfortable, turned away from the piercing eye of light in the wall, rested on its left cheek away from the window!

Bond kept his snores exactly even. Getting under the Korean's guard would be as difficult as getting past a hungry mastiff. Slowly, inch by inch, he crouched forward on the

balls of his feet and reached with his knife hand between the wall and Oddjob's seat. Now his hand was there. Now the needle-sharp tip of the dagger was aimed at the centre of the square inch of Perspex he had chosen. Bond grasped the end of his seat belt tightly in his hand, drew the knife back two inches and lunged.

Bond had had no idea what would happen when he cut through the window. All he knew from the Press reports of the Persian case was that the suction out of the pressurized cabin had whirled the passenger next to the window out through the window and into space. Now, as he whipped back his dagger, there was a fantastic howl, almost a scream of air, and Bond was sucked violently against the back of Oddjob's seat with a force that tore the end of the seat belt from his hand. Over the back of the seat he witnessed a miracle. Oddjob's body seemed to elongate towards the howling black aperture. There was a crash as his head went through and his shoulders hit the frame. Then, as if the Korean's body was toothpaste, it was slowly, foot by foot, sucked with a terrible whistling noise through the aperture. Now Oddjob was out to his waist. Now the huge buttocks stuck and the human paste moved only inch by inch. Then, with a loud boom, the buttocks got through and the legs disappeared as if shot from a gun.

After that came the end of the world. With an appalling crash of crockery from the galley, the huge plane stood on its nose and dived. The last thing Bond knew before he blacked out was the high scream of the engines through the open window and a fleeting vision of pillows and rugs whipping out into space past his eyes. Then, with a final desperate embrace of the seat in front, Bond's oxygen-starved body collapsed in a sear of lung pain.

The next thing Bond felt was a hard kick in the ribs. There was a taste of blood in his mouth. He groaned. Again the foot smashed into his body. Painfully he dragged himself to his knees between the seats and looked up through a red film. All the lights were on. There was a thin mist in the cabin. The sharp depressurization had brought the air in the cabin down below the dew-point. The roar of the engines through the open window was gigantic. An icy wind seared him. Goldfinger stood over him, his face shining under the yellow light. There was a small automatic pistol

steady in his hand. Goldfinger reached back his foot and kicked again. Bond lit with a blast of hot rage. He caught the foot and twisted it sharply, almost breaking the ankle. There came a scream from Goldfinger and a crash that shook the plane. Bond leapt for the aisle and threw himself sideways and down on to the heap of body. There was an explosion that burned the side of his face. But then his knee thudded into Goldfinger's groin and his left hand was over the gun.

For the first time in his life, Bond went berserk. With his fists and knees he pounded the struggling body while again and again he crashed his forehead down on to the glistening face. The gun came quivering towards him again. Almost indifferently Bond slashed sideways with the edge of his hand and heard the clatter of metal among the seats. Now Goldfinger's hands were at his throat and Bond's at Goldfinger's. Down, down went Bond's thumbs into the arteries. He threw all his weight forward, gasping for breath. Would he black out before the other man died? Would he? Could he stand the pressure of Goldfinger's strong hands? The glistening moon-face was changing. Deep purple showed through the tan. The eyes began to flicker up. The pressure of the hands on Bond's throat slackened. The hands fell away. Now the tongue came out and lolled from the open mouth and there came a terrible gargling from deep in the lungs. Bond sat astride the silent chest and slowly, one by one, unhinged his rigid fingers.

Bond gave a deep sigh and knelt and then stood slowly up. Dazedly he looked up and down the lighted plane. In the galley, Pussy Galore lay strapped in her seat like a head of washing. Farther down, in the middle of the aisle, the guard lay spreadeagled, one arm and the head at ridiculous angles. Without a belt to hold him when the plane dived he must have been tossed at the roof like a rag doll.

Bond brushed his hands over his face. Now he felt the burns on his palm and cheeks. Wearily he went down on his knees again and searched for the little gun. It was a Colt .25 automatic. He flicked out the magazine. Three rounds left and one in the chamber. Bond half walked half felt his way down the aisle to where the girl lay. He unbuttoned her jacket and put his hand against her waist. The heart fluttered like a pigeon under his palm.

He undid the seat belt and got the girl face down on the floor and knelt astride her. For five minutes he pumped rhythmically at her lungs. When she began to moan, he got up and left her and went on down the aisle and took a fully loaded Luger out of the dead guard's shoulder holster. On the way back past the shambles of the galley he saw an unbroken bottle of bourbon rolling gently to and fro among the wreckage. He picked it up and pulled the cork and tilted it into his open mouth. The liquor burned like disinfectant. He put the cork back and went forward. He stopped for a minute outside the cockpit door, thinking. Then, with a gun in each hand, he knocked the lever down and went through.

The five faces, blue in the instrument lights, turned towards him. The mouths made black holes and the eyes glinted white. Here the roar of the engines was less. There was a smell of fright-sweat and cigarette smoke. Bond stood with his legs braced, the guns held unwavering. He said, "Goldfinger's dead. If anyone moves or disobeys an order I shall kill him. Pilot, what's your position, course, height and speed?"

The pilot swallowed. He had to gather saliva before he could speak. He said, "Sir, we are about five hundred miles east of Goose Bay. Mr Goldfinger said we would ditch the plane as near the coast north of there as we could get. We were to reassemble at Montreal and Mr Goldfinger said we would come back and salvage the gold. Our ground speed is two hundred and fifty miles per hour and our height two thousand."

"How much flying can you do at that altitude? You must be using up fuel pretty fast."

"Yes, sir. I estimate that we have about two hours left at this height and speed."

"Get me a time signal."

The navigator answered quickly, "Just had one from Washington, sir. Five minutes to five a.m. Dawn at this level will be in about an hour."

"Where is Weathership Charlie?"

"About three hundred miles to the north-east, sir."

"Pilot, do you think you can make Goose Bay?"

"No, sir, by about a hundred miles. We can only make the coast north of there."

ght. Alter course for Weathership Charlie. Operator,
em up and give me the mike."
es, sir."

hile the plane executed a wide curve, Bond listened
he static and broken snatches of voice that sounded
n the amplifier above his head.
The operator's voice came softly to him, "Ocean Station
Charlie. This is Speedbird 510. G-ALGY calling C for
Charlie, G-ALGY calling Charlie, G-ALGY..."

A sharp voice broke in. "G-ALGY give your position.
G-ALGY give your position. This is Gander Control.
Emergency. G-ALGY..."

London came over faintly. An excited voice began chatter
ing. Now voices were coming at them from all direction
Bond could imagine the fix being quickly co-ordinated at all
flying control stations, the busy men under the arcs working
on the big plot, telephones being lifted, urgent voices
talking to each other across the world. The strong signal of
Gander Control smothered all other transmissions. "We've
located G-ALGY. We've got them at about 50 N by 70 E.
All stations stop transmitting. Priority. I repeat, we have a
fix on G-ALGY..."

Suddenly the quiet voice of C for Charlie came in. "This
is Ocean Station Charlie calling Speedbird 510. Charlie
calling G-ALGY. Can you hear me? Come in Speedbird
510."

Bond slipped the small gun into his pocket and took the
offered microphone. He pressed the transmitter switch
and talked quietly into it, watching the crew over the oblong
of plastic.

"C for Charlie this is G-ALGY Speedbird hi-jacked last
evening at Idlewild. I have killed the man responsible and
partly disabled the plane by depressurizing the cabin.
have the crew at gunpoint. Not enough fuel to make Goo
so propose to ditch as close to you as possible. Please
out line of flares."

A new voice, a voice of authority, perhaps the captain
came over the air. "Speedbird this is C for Charlie. You
message heard and understood. Identify the speaker
repeat identify the speaker over."

Bond said and smiled at the sensation his words w
cause, "Speedbird to C for Charlie. This is British S

The dead, dark glass panes were watching her, following her rows and rows of them, on guard along her way. She walked faster. Her steps beat too loudly and the houses of the whole city threw echoes back at her, echoes screaming something. She walked faster. The wind whirled her coat, raising it high over her knees, hurling it between her legs. She walked faster. She passed the poster of a worker with a red banner; the worker was laughing.

Suddenly she was running, like a shivering streak between dark shop windows and lamp posts, her coat whistling, her steps beating like a machine gun, her legs flashing and blending, like the spokes of a wheel, into one circle of motion carrying her forward. She was running or flying or being rocketed through space by something outside her body, and she knew it was all right, everything was all right if only she could run faster and faster and faster.

She came panting up the stairs. At the door, she stopped. She stopped and stood looking at the door knob, panting. And suddenly she knew that she could not go in; that she could not take her body into Leo's room, into his bed, close to his body. She ran her finger tips over the door, feeling it, caressing it uncertainly, for she could come no closer to him.

She sat down on the steps. She felt as if she could hear him—somewhere behind that door—sleeping, breathing with effort. She sat there for a long time, her eyes empty.

When she turned her head and saw that the square of the window on the landing was a dark, bright blue which was not night any longer, she got up, took her key and went in. Leo was asleep. She sat by the window, gathered into a tight huddle. He would not know what time she had come home.

*

Leo was leaving for the south.

His bag was packed. His ticket was bought. His place was reserved in a private sanatorium in Yalta and a month paid for in advance.

She had explained about the money: "You see, when I wrote to your aunt in Berlin, I also wrote to my uncle in Budapest. Oh, yes, I have an uncle in Budapest. You've never heard him mentioned because . . . you see . . . there's a family quarrel behind it—and he left Russia before the war, and my father forbade us ever to mention his name. He's not a bad fellow, and he always liked me, that's

WE THE LIVING

"Don't ever mention it to my family, because father would understand."

Andrei, she had mentioned her starving family. She did not ask: he gave her his whole monthly salary and to leave him only what she could spare. She had expected, but it was not an easy moment when she saw the money in her hand; then, she remembered the comrade comrade and why one aristocrat could die in the face of the money, with a hard, bright smile. He said he had not been easy to convince Leo to go. He said he would not let her—or her uncle—keep him. He said it tenderly. "Leo—your money or my money or anyone's money—does it really matter? Who made it matter? But you want to live. I want you to live. So much is still possible to us. You love me. Don't you love me enough to live for me? I know it will be hard. Six months. All winter. I'll miss you. But we can do it. . . . Leo, I love you. I love you. I love you. So much is still possible!"

She won.

His train was to leave at eight-fifteen in the evening. At nine, she would meet Andrei; she had asked him to take her to the opening of a new cabaret.

Leo was silent when they left their room, and in the cab on the way to the station. She went into the car with him to see the wooden bench on which he was to sleep for many nights; she had brought a pillow for him and a warm blanket. Then, they stepped out again and waited on the platform by the car. They had nothing to say.

When the first bell rang, Leo said: "Please, Kira, don't have any nonsense when the train starts. I won't look out the window. No waving, or running after the train, or thing like that."

"No, Leo."

She looked at a poster on a steel pillar; it promised an orchestra, foreign fox-trots and delicious food at the opening of the new cabaret, at nine o'clock tonight. She was wondering, bewildered, a little frightened, as if realizing the first time: "Leo . . . at nine o'clock tonight . . . you be here any more."

"I won't."

He seized her roughly and held her lips in a long, choking kiss, as long as the train whistle that wailed shrilly. He whispered: "Kira . . . my own only one. . . . I love you. . . . I love you so much. . . ."

He leaped to the steps of the car as it started moving, and disappeared inside. He did not come to the window.

She stood and heard iron chains stretching, wheels grinding rails, the engine panting far ahead, white steam spreading slowly under the steel vaults. The yellow squares of windows were suddenly pulled past her. The station smelt of carbolic acid. A faded red banner hung on a steel girder. The windows were streaming faster and faster, melting into a yellow line. There was nothing ahead but steel, steam, smoke and, under an arch very far away, a piece of sky black as a hole.

And suddenly she understood that it was a train, and that Leo was on the train, and that the train was leaving her. And something beyond terror, immense and unnamable, something which was not a human feeling, seized her. She ran after the train. She grasped an iron handle. She wanted to stop it. She knew that there was something huge and implacable moving over her, which she had to stop, which she was alone to stop, and couldn't. She was jerked forward, falling, she was whirled along down the wooden planks of the platform, and then a husky soldier in a peaked khaki cap with a red star grabbed her by the shoulders, and tore her off the handle, and threw her aside, pushing her away from the train with his elbow in her breast.

He roared:

"What do you think you're doing, citizen?"

❖ *Part Two* ❖

I

It was St. Petersburg; the war made it Petrograd; the revolution made it Leningrad.

It is a city of stone, and those living in it think not of stone brought upon a green earth and piled block on block to raise a city, but of one huge rock carved into streets, bridges, houses, and earth brought in handfuls, scattered, ground into the stone to remind them of that which lies beyond the city.

Its trees are rare strangers, sickly foreigners in a climate of granite, forlorn and superfluous. Its parks are reluctant concessions. In spring, a rare dandelion sticks a bright yellow head through the stones of its embankments, and men smile at it incredulously and condescendingly as at an impudent child. Its spring does not rise from the soil; its first violets, and very red tulips, and very blue hyacinths come in the hands of men, on street corners.

Petrograd was not born; it was created. The will of a man raised it where men did not choose to settle. An implacable emperor commanded into being the city and the ground under the city. Men brought earth to fill a swamp where no living thing existed but mosquitoes. And like mosquitoes, men died and fell into the grunting mire. No willing hands came to build the new capital. It rose by the labor of soldiers, thousands of soldiers, regiments who took orders and could not refuse to face a deadly foe, a gun or a swamp. They fell, and the earth they brought and their bones made the ground for the city. "Petrograd," its residents say, "stands on skeletons."

Petrograd is not in a hurry; it is not lazy; it is gracious and

leisurely, as befits the freedom of its vast streets. It is a city that threw itself down amid the marshes and pine forests, luxuriously, both arms outflung. Its squares are paved fields; its streets are as broad as tributaries to the Neva, the widest river to cross a great city.

On Nevsky, the capital of the capital's streets, the houses were built by generations past for generations to come. They are set and unchangeable like fortresses; their walls are thick and their windows are tiers of deep niches, rising over wide sidewalks of reddish-brown granite. From the statue of Alexander III, a huge gray man on a huge gray horse, silver rails stretch tense and straight to the Admiralty building far away, its white colonnade and thin golden spire raised like the crown, the symbol, the trade mark of Nevsky, over the broken skyline where every turret and balcony and gargoyle bending over the street are ageless features of a frozen stone face.

A golden cross on a small golden cupola rises to the clouds halfway down Nevsky, over the Anichkovsky palace, a bare red cube slashed by bare gray windows. And further, beyond the palace, a chariot raises to the clouds the black heads of its rearing horses, their hoofs hanging high over the street, over the stately columns of the Alexandrinsky theater. The palace looks like a barracks; the theater looks like a palace.

At the foot of the palace, Nevsky is cut by a stream, and a bridge arches over its swirling, muddy water. Four black statues stand at the four corners of the bridge. They may be only an accident and an ornament; they may be the very spirit of Petrograd, the city raised by man against the will of nature. Each statue is of a man and a horse. In the first one, the furious hoofs of a rearing beast are swung high in the air, ready to crush the naked, kneeling man, his arm stretched in a first effort toward the bridle of the monster. In the second, the man is up on one knee, his torso leaning back, the muscles of his legs, of his arms, of his body ready to burst through his skin, as he pulls at the bridle, in the supreme moment of the struggle. In the third, they are face to face, the man up on his feet, his head at the nostrils of a beast bewildered by a first recognition of its master. In the fourth, the beast is tamed; it steps obediently, led by the hand of the man who is tall, erect, calm in his victory, stepping forward with serene assurance, his head held straight, his eyes looking steadily into an unfathomable future.

On winter nights, strings of large white globes flare up over Nevsky—and snow sparkles over the white lights like salt

crystals—and the colored lanterns of tramways, red, green, yellow, wink far away, swimming over a soft darkness—and through lashes moist with frost the white globes look like crosses of long white searchlights on a black sky.

Nevsky starts on the shore of the Neva, at a quay as trim and perfect as a drawing room, with a red-granite parapet and a row of palaces, of straight angles, tall windows, chaste columns and balustrades, severe, harmonious and luxuriously stern in their masculine grace.

Divided by the river, Petrograd's greatest mansion, the Winter Palace, faces Petrograd's greatest prison, the Peter-Paul Fortress. The Czars lived in the Winter Palace; when they died, they crossed the Neva: in the cathedral of the Fortress, white slabs rose over the graves of the Czars. The prison stood behind the cathedral. The walls of the Fortress guarded the dead Czars and the Czar's living enemies. In the long, silent halls of the palace, tall mirrors reflected the ramparts behind which men were forgotten, alive for decades in lonely stone graves.

Bridges rise over the river, as long humps of steel, with tramways crawling slowly up to the middle and rolling swiftly, clattering, down to the other shore. The right bank, beyond the Fortress, is a gradual surrender of the city to that earth, that countryside it has driven out; the Kamenostrovsky, a broad, quiet, endless avenue, is like a stream full of the fragrance of a future sea, a street where each step is a forecast of the country to come. The avenue and the city and the river end at the Islands, where the Neva breaks among bits of land held together by delicate bridges, where heavy white cones rise in tiers edged with dark green, over a deep silence of snow, and fir branches and bird footprints alone break the white desolation, and beyond the last island, the sky and sea are an unfinished water color of pale gray with a faint greenish band smeared across to mark a future horizon.

But Petrograd also has side streets. Petrograd's side streets are of colorless stone rain-washed into the gray of the clouds above and of the mud below. They are bare as jail corridors; they cut each other in naked corners of square buildings that look like prisons. Old gateways are locked at night over mud-swollen ruts. Little shops frown with faded signs over turbid windows. Little parks choke with consumptive grass into which mud and dust and mud again have been ground for a

On dark corners, rusty ikons of the Madonna are nailed over forgotten tin boxes, begging coppers for orphanages.

And farther up the Neva, rise forests of red-brick chimneys, spewing a black cloud that hangs over old, stooping, wooden houses, over an embankment of rotting logs at the placid, indifferent river. Rain falls slowly through the smoke; rain, smoke and stone are the theme-song of the city.

Petrograd's residents wonder, sometimes, at the strange bonds that hold them. After the long winter, they curse the mud and the stone, and cry for pine forests; they flee from the city as from a hated stepmother; they flee to green grass and sand and to the sparkling capitals of Europe. And, as to an unconquerable mistress, they return in the fall, hungry for the wide streets, the shrieking tramways and the cobblestones, serene and relieved, as if life were beginning again. "Petrograd," they say, "is the only City."

Cities grow like forests, like weeds. Petrograd did not grow. It was born finished and complete. Petrograd is not acquainted with nature. It was the work of man.

Nature makes mistakes and takes chances; it mixes its colors and knows little of straight lines. But Petrograd is the work of man who knows what he wants.

Petrograd's grandeur is unmarred, its squalor unrelieved. Its facets are cut clearly, sharply; they are deliberate, perfect with the straight-forward perfection of man's work.

Cities grow with a people, and fight for the place at the head of cities, and rise slowly up the steps of years. Petrograd did not rise. It came to be at the height. It was commanded to command. It was a capital before its first stone was laid. It was a monument to the spirit of man.

Peoples know nothing of the spirit of man, for peoples are only nature, and man is a word that has no plural. Petrograd is not of the people. It has no legend, no folklore; it is not glorified in nameless songs down nameless roads. It is a stranger, aloof, incomprehensible, forbidding. No pilgrims ever traveled to its granite gates. The gates had never been opened in warm compassion to the meek, the hurt and the miserable like the doors of the kindly Moscow. Petrograd does not want a soul; it has a mind.

And perhaps it is only a coincidence that in the Russians, Moscow is "she," while Petrograd has been "he."

And perhaps it is only a coincidence

the power in the name of the people, transferred their capital to the meek Moscow from the haughty aristocrat of cities.

In 1924, a man named Lenin died and the city was ordered to be called Leningrad. The revolution also brought posters to the city's walls, and red banners to its houses, and sunflower-seed shells to its cobblestones. It cut a proletarian poem into the pedestal of the statue of Alexander III, and put a red rag on a stick into the hand of Catherine II in a small garden off Nevsky. It called Nevsky "Prospect of October 25th" and Sadovaia, a cross street—"Street of July 3rd," in honor of dates it wanted remembered; and at the intersection, hefty conductoresses yell in the crowded tramways: "Corner of October twenty-fifth and July third! Terminal for yellow tickets. New fare, citizens!"

In the early summer of 1925 the State Textile Trust put out new cotton prints. And women smiled in the streets of Petrograd, women wearing dresses made of new materials for the first time in many years.

But there were only half-a-dozen patterns of prints in the city. Women in black and white checks passed women in black and white checks; women in red-dotted white met women in green-dotted white; women with spirals of blue on a gray dress met women with the same spirals of brown on a tan dress. They passed by like inmates of a huge orphanage, frowning, sullen, uncomfortable, losing all joy in their new garments.

In a store on Nevsky, the State Porcelain Trust displayed a glistening window of priceless china, a white tea service with odd, fuzzy, modern flowers engraved in thin black by the hand of a famous new artist. The service had stood there for months; no one could afford to buy it.

Windows sparkled with foreign imitation jewelry—strings of flowered wax beads, earrings of bright celluloid circles, the latest fashion, protected by a stupendous price from the wistful women who stopped to admire them.

In a street off Nevsky, a foreign book store had been opened; a window two floors high flaunted the glossy, radiant, incredible covers of volumes that had come from across the border.

Bright awnings spread over Nevsky's wide, dry sidewalks, and barometers sparkled in the sun with the clear, piercing fire of clean glass.

A huge cotton billboard stood leaning against a building, presenting the tense face, enormous eyes and long, thin hands of a famous actor painted in bold brush strokes under the name of a German film.

Pictures of Lenin looked down at the passersby, a suspicious face with a short beard and narrow Oriental eyes, draped in red bunting and mourning crêpe.

On street corners, in the sun, ragged men sold saccharine and plaster busts of Lenin. Sparrows chirped on telephone wires. Lines stood at the doors of co-operatives; women took off their jackets and, in short-sleeved, wrinkled blouses, offered flabby white arms to the first heat of the summer sun.

A poster hung high on a wall. On the poster, a huge worker swung a hammer toward the sky, and the shadow of the hammer fell like a huge black cross over the little buildings of the city under his boots.

Kira Argounova stopped by the poster to light a cigarette.

She took a paper box from the pocket of her old coat and, with two straight fingers, swiftly, without looking, swung a cigarette into her mouth. Then she opened her old handbag of imitation leather and took out an expensive foreign lighter engraved with her initials. She flicked a brief little flame, hurled a jet of smoke from the corner of her mouth and slammed the bag shut over the lighter. She jerked the frayed cuff of her coat sleeve and glanced at a sparkling watch on a narrow gold band. She swung forward; the high heels of her slippers rang hurriedly, resonantly down the granite sidewalk. Her slippers were patched; her legs displayed the tight, sheer luster of foreign silk stockings.

She walked toward an old palace that bore a red, five-pointed star over the entrance and an inscription in gold letters:

DISTRICT CLUB OF THE ALL-UNION COMMUNIST PARTY

Its glass door was severely, immaculately polished, but the latch on its garden gate was broken. Weeds grew over what had been gravelled walks, and cigarette stubs rocked softly in an abandoned fountain, around a dejected marble cupid with a greenish patch of rust across its stomach, at the dry mouth of an urn.

Kira hurried down deserted walks, through a thick, neglected green tangle that drowned the clatter of tramways outside; blue pigeons fluttered lazily into the branches at the sound of her steps, and a bee rocked on a heavy purple tuft of clover. A giant regiment of oaks stood with arm stretched, hiding the palace from the eyes of the street.

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She walked toward an old palace that bore a red, five-pointed star over the entrance and an inscription in gold letters:

DISTRICT CLUB OF THE ALL-UNION COMMUNIST PARTY

Its glass door was severely, immaculately polished, but the latch on its garden gate was broken. Weeds grew over what had been gravelled walks, and cigarette stubs rocked softly in an abandoned fountain, around a dejected marble cupid with a greenish patch of rust across its stomach, at the dry mouth of an urn.

Kira hurried down deserted walks, through a thick, neglected green tangle that drowned the clatter of tramways outside; blue pigeons fluttered lazily into the branches at the sound of her steps, and a bee rocked on a heavy purple tuft of clover. A giant regiment of oaks stood with arms outstretched, hiding the palace from the eyes of the street.

In the depths of the garden stood a small two-storied wing

the power in the name of the people, transferred their capital to the meek Moscow from the haughty aristocrat of cities.

In 1924, a man named Lenin died and the city was ordered to be called Leningrad. The revolution also brought posters to the city's walls, and red banners to its houses, and sunflower-seed shells to its cobblestones. It cut a proletarian poem into the pedestal of the statue of Alexander III, and put a red rag on a stick into the hand of Catherine II in a small garden off Nevsky. It called Nevsky "Prospect of October 25th" and Sadovaia, a cross street—"Street of July 3rd," in honor of dates it wanted remembered; and at the intersection, hefty conductoresses yell in the crowded tramways: "Corner of October twenty-fifth and July third! Terminal for yellow tickets. New fare, citizens!"

In the early summer of 1925 the State Textile Trust put out new cotton prints. And women smiled in the streets of Petrograd, women wearing dresses made of new materials for the first time in many years.

But there were only half-a-dozen patterns of prints in the city. Women in black and white checks passed women in black and white checks; women in red-dotted white met women in green-dotted white; women with spirals of blue on a gray dress met women with the same spirals of brown on a tan dress. They passed by like inmates of a huge orphanage, frowning, sullen, uncomfortable, losing all joy in their new garments.

In a store on Nevsky, the State Porcelain Trust displayed a glistening window of priceless china, a white tea service with odd, fuzzy, modern flowers engraved in thin black by the hand of a famous new artist. The service had stood there for months; no one could afford to buy it.

Windows sparkled with foreign imitation jewelry—strings of flowered wax beads, earrings of bright celluloid circles, the latest fashion, protected by a stupendous price from the wistful women who stopped to admire them.

In a street off Nevsky, a foreign book store had been opened; a window two floors high flaunted the glossy, radiant, incredible covers of volumes that had come from across the border.

Bright awnings spread over Nevsky's wide, dry sidewalks, and barometers sparkled in the sun with the clear, piercing fire of clean glass.

A huge cotton billboard stood leaning against a building, presenting the tense face, enormous eyes and long, thin hands of a famous actor painted in bold brush strokes under the name of a German film.

Pictures of Lenin looked down at the passersby, a suspicious face with a short beard and narrow Oriental eyes, draped in red bunting and mourning crêpe.

On street corners, in the sun, ragged men sold saccharine and plaster busts of Lenin. Sparrows chirped on telephone wires. Lines stood at the doors of co-operatives; women took off their jackets and, in short-sleeved, wrinkled blouses, offered flabby white arms to the first heat of the summer sun.

A poster hung high on a wall. On the poster, a huge worker swung a hammer toward the sky, and the shadow of the hammer fell like a huge black cross over the little buildings of the city under his boots.

Kira Argounova stopped by the poster to light a cigarette.

She took a paper box from the pocket of her old coat and, with two straight fingers, swiftly, without looking, swung a cigarette into her mouth. Then she opened her old handbag of imitation leather and took out an expensive foreign lighter engraved with her initials. She flicked a brief little flame, hurled a jet of smoke from the corner of her mouth and slammed the bag shut over the lighter. She jerked the frayed cuff of her coat sleeve and glanced at a sparkling watch on a narrow gold band. She swung forward; the high heels of her slippers rang hurriedly, resonantly down the granite sidewalk. Her slippers were patched; her legs displayed the tight, sheer luster of foreign silk stockings.

She walked toward an old palace that bore a red, five-pointed star over the entrance and an inscription in gold letters:

linked to the palace by the bridge of a short gallery. The windows of the first floor were broken and a sparrow sat on a sharp glass edge, jerking its head sidewise to look into the mouldy, deserted rooms. But on a window sill of the second floor lay a pile of books.

The heavy, hand-carved door was not locked. Kira went in and swung impatiently up the long stairway. It was a very long stairway. It rose to the second floor in a straight line, an endless flight of bare stone steps, cracked and crumbling in little trails of gravel. The stairway had had a magnificent white balustrade; but the balustrade was broken; empty holes gaped over the jagged stumps of marble columns and their white bodies still lay at the foot of the stairs. Hollow echoes rolled against the walls, against the murals of graceful white swans on blue lakes, of rose garlands, of sensual nymphs fleeing from grinning satyrs; the murals were faded and cut by gashes of peeling plaster.

Kira knocked at the door on the top of the stairs.

Andrei Taganov opened it and stepped back, astonished; his eyes widened in the slow, incredulous glance of a man looking at a miracle that could not become habitual; he forgot to move, he stood before her, the collar of a white shirt thrown open at his sunburnt throat.

"Kira!"

She laughed, a clear, metallic laughter: "How are you, Andrei?"

His hands closed slowly, softly over her shoulders, so softly that she could not feel his hands, only their strength, their will holding her, bending her backward; but his lips on hers were brutal, uncontrollable. His eyes were closed; hers were open, looking indifferently up at the ceiling.

"Kira, I didn't expect you till tonight."

"I know. But you won't throw me out, will you?"

She stepped aside, preceding him through the dim little lobby into his room, throwing her bag on a chair, her hat on a table, with imperious familiarity.

She alone knew why Andrei Taganov had had to economize, that winter; why he had given up his room and moved into an abandoned wing of the palace, which the Party Club could not use and had given to him free of rent.

It had been the secret love nest of a prince. Many years ago, a forgotten sovereign had waited there for the light, stealthy footsteps and the rustle of a silk skirt up the long

marble stairway. His magnificent furniture was gone; but the walls, the fireplace and the ceiling remained.

The walls were covered with a white brocade hand-embroidered in delicate little wreaths of blue and silver leaves. A marble row of cupids with garlands and cornucopias spouting frozen white flowers encircled the cornice. A marble Leda reclined voluptuously in the embrace of white wings over the fireplace. And from the soft blue of a sky painted on the ceiling, among pale, downy clouds, white doves—that had watched long nights of luxurious orgies—now looked at an iron bed, broken-down chairs, a long unpainted table loaded with books in bright red covers, wooden boxes piled as a dresser, posters of Red Army soldiers hiding the splits in the white brocade, and a leather jacket hanging on a nail in a corner.

Kira said peremptorily: "I came now to tell you that I can't come tonight."

"Oh! . . . You can't, Kira?"

"No. I can't. Now don't look tragic. Here, I brought you something to cheer you up."

She took a small toy from her pocket, a glass tube that ended in a bulb filled with a red liquid in which a little black figure floated, trembling.

"What's that?"

She held the bulb in her closed fist, but the little figure did not move. "I can't do it. You try. Hold it this way."

She closed his fingers over the bulb. No expression, no movement of his told it to her, but she knew that he was not indifferent to the touch of her fingers on his, that all of the past winter had not made him accustomed and indifferent. The red liquid in the sealed tube spurted up suddenly in furious, boiling bubbles; the little black, horned figure jumped ecstatically up and down through the storm.

"See? They call it American Resident. I bought it on a street corner. Cute, isn't it?"

He smiled and watched the imp dancing. "Very cute. . . . Kira, why can't you come tonight?"

"It's . . . some business that I have to attend. Nothing important. Do you mind?"

"No. Not if it's inconvenient for you. Can you stay now?"

"Only for a little while." She tore her coat off and threw it on the bed.

"Oh, Kira!"

"Like it? It's your own fault. You insisted on a new dress."

The dress was red, very plain, very short, trimmed in black patent leather: a belt, four buttons, a flat round collar and a huge bow. She stood, leaning against the door, slouching a little, suddenly very fragile and young, a child's dress clinging to a body that looked as helpless and innocent as a child's, her tangled hair thrown back, her skirt high over slender legs pressed closely together, her eyes round and candid, but her smile mocking and confident, her lips moist, wide. He stood looking at her, frightened by a woman who looked more dangerous, more desirable than he had ever known.

She jerked her head impatiently: "Well? You don't like it?"

"Kira, you are . . . the dress is . . . so lovely. I've never seen a woman's dress like that."

"What do you know about women's dresses?"

"I looked through a whole magazine of Paris fashions at the Censorship bureau yesterday."

"You looking through a fashion magazine?"

"I was thinking of you. I wanted to know what women liked."

"And what did you learn?"

"Things I'd like you to have. Funny little hats. And slippers like sandals—with nothing but straps. And jewelry. Diamonds."

"Andrei! You didn't tell that to your comrades at the Censorship bureau, did you?"

He laughed, still looking at her intently, incredulously: "No. I didn't."

"Stop staring at me like that. What's the matter? Are you afraid to come near me?"

His fingers touched the red dress. Then his lips sank suddenly into the hollow of her naked elbow.

He sat in the deep niche of the window sill and she stood beside him, in the tight circle of his arms. His face was expressionless, and only his eyes laughed soundlessly, cried to her soundlessly what he could not say.

Then he was talking, his face buried in the red dress: "You know, I'm glad you came now, instead of tonight. There were still so many hours to wait. . . . I've never seen you like this. . . . I've tried to read and I couldn't. . . . Will you wear this dress next time? Was that your own idea, this leather bow? . . . Why do you look so . . . so much more grownup in a childish dress like this? . . . I like that bow. . . . Kira, you know, I've missed you so terribly. . . . Even when I'm working I . . ."

Her eyes were soft, pleading, a little frightened: "Andrei, you shouldn't think of me when you're working."

He said slowly, without smiling: "Sometimes, it's only thoughts of you that help me—through my work."

"Andrei! What's the matter?"

But he was smiling again: "Why don't you want me to think of you? Remember, last time you were here, you told me about that book you read with a hero called Andrei and you said you thought of me? I've been repeating it to myself ever since, and I bought the book. I know it isn't much, Kira, but . . . well . . . you don't say them often, things like that."

She leaned back, her hands crossed behind her head, mocking and irresistible: "Oh, I think of you so seldom I've forgotten your last name. Hope I read it in a book. Why, I've even forgotten that scar, right there, over your eye." Her finger was following the line of the scar, sliding down his forehead, erasing his frown; she was laughing, ignoring the plea she had understood.

"Kira, would it cost so very much to install a telephone in your house?"

"But they . . . we . . . have no electrical connections in the apartment. It's really impossible."

"I've wished so often that you had a phone. Then I could call you . . . once in a while. Sometimes, it's so hard to wait, just wait for you."

"Don't I come here as often as you wish, Andrei?"

"It isn't that. Sometimes . . . you see . . . I want just a look at you . . . the same day you've been here . . . sometimes even a minute after you've left. It's that feeling that you're gone and I have no way of calling, of finding you, no right to approach the house where you live, as if you had left the city. Sometimes, I look at all the people in the streets—and it frightens me—that feeling that you're lost somewhere among them—and I can't get to you, I can't scream to you over all those heads."

She said, implacably: "Andrei, you've promised never to call at my house."

"But wouldn't you allow me to telephone, if we could arrange it?"

"No. My parents might guess. And . . . oh, Andrei, we have to be careful. We have to be so careful—particularly now."

"Why particularly now?"

"Oh, no more than usual. It isn't so hard, is it, that one condition, just to be careful—for my sake?"

"No, dear."

"I'll come often. I'll still be here when you'll become tired of me."

"Kira, why do you say that?"

"Well, you'll be tired of me, some day, won't you?"

"You don't think that, do you?"

She said hastily: "No, of course not. . . . Well, of course, I love you. You know it. But I don't want you to feel . . . to feel that you're tied to me . . . that your life . . ."

"Kira, why don't you want me to say that my life. . . ."

"This is why I don't want you to say anything."

She bent and closed his mouth with a kiss that hurt it.

Beyond the window, some club member in the palace was practising the "Internationale," slowly, with one hand, on a sonorous concert piano.

Andrei's lips moved hungrily over her throat, her hands, her shoulders. He tore himself away with an effort. He made himself say lightly, gaily, as an escape, rising: "I have something for you, Kira. It was for tonight. But then . . ."

He took a tiny box from a drawer of his desk, and pressed it into her hand. She protested helplessly: "Oh, Andrei, you shouldn't. I've asked you not to. With all you've done for me and . . ."

"I've done nothing for you. I think you're too unselfish. It has always been your family. I've had to fight to have you get this dress."

"And the stockings, and the lighter, and . . . Oh, Andrei, I'm so grateful to you, but . . ."

"But don't be afraid to open it."

It was a small, flat bottle of real French perfume. She gasped. She wanted to protest. But she looked at his smile and she could only laugh happily: "Oh, Andrei!"

His hand moved slowly in the air, without touching her, following the line of her neck, her breast, her body, cautiously, attentively, as if modeling a statue.

"What are you doing, Andrei?"

"Trying to remember."

"What?"

"Your body. As you stand—just now. Sometimes when I'm alone, I try to draw you in the air—like this—to feel as if you were standing before me."

She pressed herself closer to him. Her eyes were growing

darker; her smile seemed slow and heavy. She said, extending the perfume bottle: "You must open it. I want you to give me the first drop—yourself." She drew him down to her side, on the bed. She asked: "Where will you put it?"

His finger tips moist with the bewildering fragrance from another world, he pressed them timidly into her hair.

She laughed defiantly: "Where else?"

His finger tips brushed her lips.

"Where else?"

His hand drew a soft line down her throat, stopping abruptly at the black patent leather collar.

Her eyes holding his, she jerked her collar, tearing the snaps of her dress open. "Where else?"

He was whispering, his lips on her breast: "Oh, Kira, Kira, I wanted you—here—tonight. . . ."

She leaned back, her face dark, challenging, pitiless, her voice low: "I'm here—now."

"But . . ."

"Why not?"

"If you don't . . ."

"I do. That's why I came."

And as he tried to rise, her arms pulled him down imperiously. She whispered: "Don't bother to undress. I haven't the time."

*

He could forgive her the words, for he had forgotten them, when he saw her exhausted, breathing jerkily, her eyes closed, her head limp in the curve of his arm. He was grateful to her for the pleasure he had given her.

He could forgive anything, when she turned to him suddenly at the door, gathering her coat over the wrinkled red dress, when she whispered, her voice pleading, wistful and tender: "You won't miss me too much till next time, will you? . . . I . . . I've made you happy, haven't I?"

*

She ran swiftly up the stairs to her apartment, the home that had been Admiral Kovalensky's. She unlocked the door, looking impatiently at her wristwatch.

In the former drawing room, Marisha Lavrova was busy, standing over a Primus, stirring a kettle of soup with one hand, holding a book in the other, memorizing aloud: "The relationships of social classes can be studied on . . ."

the distribution of the economic means of production at any given historical . . ."

Kira stopped beside her. "How's the Marxist theory, Marisha?" she interrupted loudly, tearing her hat off, shaking her hair. "Do you have a cigarette? Smoked my last one on the way home."

Marisha nodded with her chin toward the dresser. "In the drawer," she answered. "Light one for me, too, will you? How's things?"

"Fine. Wonderful weather outside. Real summer. Busy?"

"Uh-uh. Have to give a lecture at the Club tomorrow—on Historical Materialism."

Kira lighted two cigarettes and stuck one into Marisha's mouth.

"Thanks," Marisha acknowledged, swirling the spoon in the thick mixture. "Historical Materialism and noodle soup. That's for a guest," she winked slyly. "Guess you know him. Name's Victor Dunaev."

"I wish you luck. You and Victor both."

"Thanks. How's everything with you? Heard from the boy friend lately?"

Kira answered reluctantly: "Yes. I received a letter. . . . And a telegram."

"How's he getting along? When's he coming back?"

It was as if Kira's face had frozen suddenly into a stern, reverent calm, as if Marisha were looking again at the austere Kira of eight months ago. She answered:

"Tonight."

Handwritten:
Kira

Handwritten:
II 19

A telegram lay on the table before Kira. It contained four words:

"Arriving June fifth. Leo."

She had read it often; but two hours remained till the arrival of the Crimean train and she could still re-read it many times. She spread it out on the gray, faded satin cover of the bed and knelt by its side, carefully smoothing every wrinkle of the paper. It had four words: a word for every two months

past; she wondered how many days she had paid for every letter, she did not try to think of how many hours and of what the hours had been.

But she remembered how many times she had cried to herself: "It doesn't matter. He'll come back—saved." It had become so simple and so easy: if one could reduce one's life to but one desire—life could be cold, clear and bearable. Perhaps others still knew that there were people, streets, and feelings; she didn't; she knew only that he would come back saved. It had been a drug and a disinfectant; it had burned everything out and left her icy, limpid, smiling.

There had been her room—suddenly grown so empty that she wondered, bewildered, how four walls could hold such an enormous void. There had been mornings when she awakened to stare at a day as dim and hopeless as the gray square of snow clouds in the window, and it took her a tortured effort to rise; days when each step across the room was a conquest of will, when all the objects around her, the Primus, the cupboard, the table, were enemies screaming to her of what they had shared with her, of what they had lost.

But Leo was in the Crimea where every minute was a ray of sunlight, and every ray of sunlight—a new drop of life.

There had been days when she fled from her room to people and voices, and fled from the people, for she found herself suddenly still lonelier, and she fled to wander through the streets, her hands in her pockets, her shoulders hunched, watching the sleigh runners, the sparrows, the snow around the lights, begging of them something she could not name. Then she returned home, and lighted the "Bourgeoise," and ate a half-cooked dinner on a bare table, lost in a dim room, crushed under the huge sound of the logs crackling, the clock ticking on a shelf, hoofs crunching snow beyond the window.

But Leo drank milk and ate fruit with skins bursting into fresh, sparkling juice.

There had been nights when she buried her head under the blanket and her face in the pillow, as if trying to escape from her own body, a body burning with the touch of a stranger's hands—in the bed that had been Leo's.

But Leo was lying on a beach by the sea and his body was growing suntanned.

There had been moments when she saw, in sudden astonishment, as if she had not grasped it before, just what she was doing to her own body; then she closed her eyes behind

that thought was another one, more frightening, forbidden: of what she was doing to another man's soul.

But Leo had gained five pounds and the doctors were pleased.

There had been moments when she felt as if she were actually seeing the downward movement of a smiling mouth, the swift, peremptory wave of a long, thin hand, seeing them for a second briefer than lightning, and then her every muscle screamed with pain, so that she thought that she was not alone to hear it.

But Leo wrote to her.

She read his letters, trying to remember the inflection of his voice as it would pronounce each word. She spread the letters around her and sat in the room as with a living presence.

He was coming back, cured, strong, saved. She had lived eight months for one telegram. She had never looked beyond it. Beyond the telegram, there was no future.

*

The train from the Crimea was late.

Kira stood on the platform, motionless, looking at the empty track, two long bands of steel that turned to brass far away, in the clear, summer sunset beyond the terminal vaults. She was afraid to look at the clock and learn that which she had feared: that the train was hopelessly, indefinitely late. The platform trembled under the grating wheels of a heavy baggage truck. Somewhere in the long steel tunnel, a voice cried mournfully at regular intervals, the same words that blended into one, like the call of a bird in the dusk: "Grishka shove it over." Boots shuffled lazily, aimlessly past her. Across the tracks a woman sat on a bundle, her head drooping. The glass panes above were turning a desolate orange. The voice called plaintively: "Grishka shove it over. . . ."

When Kira went to the office of the station commandant, the executive answered briskly that the train would be quite late; unavoidable delay; a misunderstanding at a junction; the train was not expected till tomorrow morning.

She stood on the platform for a little while longer, aimlessly, reluctant to leave the place where she had almost felt his presence. Then she walked out slowly, walked down the stairs, her arms limp, her feet lingering unsteadily on every step she descended.

Far down at the end of the street, the sky was a flat band of

bright, pure, motionless yellow, like the spilled yoke of an egg, and the street looked brown and wide in a warm twilight. She walked away slowly.

She saw a familiar corner, passed it, then came back and swerved into another direction, toward the house of the Du-naevs. She had an evening that had to be filled.

Irina opened the door. Her hair was wild, uncombed, but she wore a new dress of black and white striped batiste, and her tired face was powdered neatly.

"Well, Kira! Of all people! What a rare surprise! Come in. Take your coat off. I have something—someone—to show you. And how do you like my new dress?"

Kira was laughing suddenly. She took off her coat: she wore a new dress of black and white striped batiste. Irina gasped: "Oh . . . oh, hell! When did you get it?"

"About a week ago."

"I thought that if I got the plain stripes, I wouldn't see so many of them around, but the first time I wore it, I met three ladies in the same dress, within fifteen minutes. . . . Oh, what's the use? . . . Oh, well, come on!"

In the dining room the windows were open, and the room felt spacious, fresh with the soft clatter of the street. Vasil Ivanovitch got up hastily, smiling, dropping tools and a piece of wood on the table. Victor rose gracefully, bowing. A tall, blond, husky young man jumped up and stood stiffly, while Irina announced: "Two little twins from the Soviet reformatory! . . . Kira, may I present Sasha Chernov? Sasha—my cousin, Kira Argounova."

Sasha's hand was big and firm, and his handshake too strong. He grinned shyly, a timid, candid, disarming grin.

"Sasha, this is a rare treat for you," said Irina. "A rare guest. The recluse of Petrograd."

"Of Leningrad," Victor corrected.

"Of Petrograd," Irina repeated. "How are you, Kira? I hate to admit how glad I am to see you."

"I'm delighted to meet you," Sasha muttered. "I've heard so much about you."

"Without a doubt," said Victor, "Kira is the most talked about woman in the city—and even in Party circles." Kira glanced at him sharply; but he was smiling pleasantly: "Glamorous women have always been an irresistible theme for admiring whispers. Like Madame de Pompadour, for instance. Charm refutes the Marxist theory: it knows no class distinctions."

"Shut up," said Irina. "I don't know what you're talking about, but I'm sure it's something rotten."

"Not at all," said Kira quietly, holding Victor's eyes, "Victor is very complimentary, even though he does exaggerate."

Awkwardly, diffidently, Sasha moved a chair for Kira, offering it to her silently with a wave of his hand and a helpless grin.

"Sasha is studying history," said Irina, "that is, he was. He's been thrown out of the University for trying to think in a country of free thought."

"I will have you understand, Irina," said Victor, "that I won't tolerate such remarks in my presence. I expect the Party to be respected."

"Oh, stop acting!" Irina snapped. "The Party Collective won't hear you."

Kira noticed Sasha's long, silent glance at Victor; Sasha's steely blue eyes were neither bashful nor friendly.

"I'm sorry about the University, Sasha," said Kira, feeling suddenly that she liked him.

"I did not mind it," Sasha drawled in a quiet, measured tone of conviction. "It, really, was not essential. There are some outward circumstances which an autocratic power can control. There are some values it can never reach nor subjugate."

"You will discover, Kira," Victor smiled coldly, "that you and Sasha have much in common. You are both inclined to disregard the rudiments of caution."

"Victor, will you . . ." Vasili Ivanovitch began.

"Father, I have a right to expect, as long as I'm feeding this family, that my views . . ."

"You're feeding whom?" a shrill voice asked from the next room. Acia appeared on the threshold, her stockings loose around her ankles, the shreds of a torn magazine in one hand and a pair of scissors in the other. "I wish someone'd feed someone. I'm still hungry and Irina wouldn't give me a second helping of soup."

"Father, I expect something to be done about this child," said Victor. "She's growing up like a bum. If she were to join a children's organization, such as the Pioneers . . ."

"Victor, we won't discuss that again," Vasili Ivanovitch interrupted firmly, quietly.

"Who wants to be a stinking Pioneer?" asked Acia.

"Acia, you go back to your room," Irina ordered, "or I'll put you to bed."

"You and who else?" stated Acia, disappearing behind a slammed door.

"Really," Victor observed, "if I'm able to study at a school and work besides and provide for this household, I don't see why Irina can't take proper care of one brat."

No one answered.

Vasili Ivanovitch bent over the piece of wood he had been carving. Irina drew pictures with a spoon handle on the old table cloth. Victor rose to his feet: "Sorry, Kira, to desert such a rare guest, but I have to go. I have a dinner engagement."

"Sure," said Irina. "See that the hostess doesn't borrow any silverware from Kira's room."

Victor left. Kira noticed that the tools were trembling in Vasili Ivanovitch's wrinkled fingers.

"What are you doing, Uncle Vasili?"

"Making a frame," Vasili Ivanovitch raised his head, showing his work proudly, "for one of Irina's pictures. They're good pictures. It's a shame to let them get crumpled and ruined in a drawer."

"It's beautiful, Uncle Vasili. I didn't know you could do that."

"Oh, I used to be good at it. I haven't done it for years. But I used to be good in the . . . in the old days, when I was a young man, in Siberia."

"How's your job, Uncle Vasili?"

"No more," said Irina. "How long do you think one can keep a job in a private store?"

"What happened?"

"Haven't you heard? They closed the store for back taxes. And the boss, himself, is now more broke than we are. . . . Would you like some tea, Kira? I'll fix it. The tenants stole our Primus, but Sasha will help me to light the samovar in the kitchen. Come on!" she threw at him imperiously, and Sasha rose obediently. "I don't know why I ask him to help," she winked at Kira, "he's the most helpless, useless, awkward thing born." But her eyes were sparkling happily. She took his arm and wheeled him out of the room.

It was growing dark, and the open window was a sharp, bright blue. Vasili Ivanovitch did not light a lamp. He bent lower over his carving.

"Sasha is a nice boy," he said suddenly, "and I'm worried."

"Why?" asked Kira.

He whispered: "Politics. Secret societies. Poor doomed little fool."

"And Victor suspects?"

"I think so."

It was Irina who switched on the light, returning with a sparkling tray of cups, preceding Sasha with a steaming samovar.

"Here's the tea. And some cookies. I made them. See how you like them, Kira, for an artist's cooking."

"How's the art, Irina?"

"The job, you mean? Oh, I still have it. But I'm afraid I'm not too good at drawing posters. I've been reprimanded twice in the Wall Newspaper. They said my peasant women looked like cabaret dancers and my workers were too graceful. My bourgeois ideology, you know. Well, what do they want? It's not my specialty. I could scream, sometimes, I can't get any ideas at all for one more of those damn posters."

"And now they have that competition," Vasili Ivanovitch said mournfully.

"What competition?"

Irina spilled tea on the table cloth. "An inter-club competition. Who'll make the most, the best and the reddest posters. Have to work two hours extra every day—free—for the glory of the Club."

"Under the Soviets," drawled Sasha, "there is no exploitation."

"I thought," said Irina, "that I had a good idea for a winner: a real proletarian wedding—a worker and a peasant woman on a tractor, God damn them! But I heard that the Club of Red Printers is making a symbolic one—the union of an airplane and a tractor—sort of the spirit of Electrification and Proletarian State Construction."

"And the wages," sighed Vasili Ivanovitch. "She spent all of her last month's salary on shoes for Acia."

"Well," said Irina, "she couldn't go barefooted."

"Irina, you work too hard," Sasha remarked, "and you take the work too seriously. Why waste your nerves? It's all temporary."

"It is," said Vasili Ivanovitch.

"I hope it is," said Kira.

"Sasha's my life-saver," Irina's weary mouth smiled tremulously and sarcastically at once, as if trying to deny the involuntary tenderness in her voice. "He took me to the theater last week. And week before last, we went to the Museum of Alexander III, and we wandered there for hours, looking at the paintings."

"Leo's coming back tomorrow," Kira said suddenly, irrelevantly, as if she could not keep it any longer.

"Oh!" Irina's spoon clattered down. "You never told us I'm so glad! And he's quite well?"

"Yes. He was to return tonight, but the train is late."

"How is his aunt in Berlin?" asked Vasili Ivanovitch. "Still helping you? There's an example of family loyalty. I have the greatest admiration for that lady, even though I've never seen her. Anyone who's safe, away, free and can still understand us, buried alive in this Soviet graveyard, must be a wonderful person. She's saved Leo's life."

"Uncle Vasili," said Kira, "when you see Leo, will you remember never to mention it? His aunt's help, I mean. You remember I explained to you how sensitive he is about being under obligation to her, and so we'll all be careful not to remind him of it, will we?"

"Certainly, I understand, child. Don't worry. . . . But that's Europe for you. That's abroad. That's what a human life does to a human being. I think it's hard for us to understand kindness and what used to be called ethics. We're all turning into beasts in a beastly struggle. But we'll be saved. We'll be saved before it gets us all."

"We don't have long to wait," said Sasha.

Kira noticed a frightened, pleading look in Irina's eyes.

It was late when Kira and Sasha rose to go. He lived far on the other side of the city, but he offered to escort her home, for the streets were dark. He wore an old coat and he walked fast, slouching. They hurried together through a soft, transparent twilight, through the city full of the fragrance of a warm earth somewhere far under the pavements and cobblestones.

"Irina isn't happy," he said suddenly.

"No," said Kira, "she isn't. No one is."

"We're living in difficult times. But things will change. Things are changing. There still are men to whom freedom is more than a word on posters."

"Do you think they have a chance, Sasha?"

His voice was low, tense with a passionate conviction, a quiet strength that made her wonder why she had ever thought him bashful: "Do you think the Russian worker is a beast that licks its yoke while his mind is being battered out of him? Do you think he's fooled by the clatter of a very noise of tyrants? Do you know what he reads? Do you know the books that are hidden in the factories? The papers that pass secretly through many hands? Do you know that the people are awakening?"

"Sasha," she interrupted, "aren't you playing a very dangerous game?"

He did not answer. He looked at the old roofs of the city against a milky, bluish sky.

"The people," she said, "has claimed too many victims already—of your kind."

"Russia has a long revolutionary history," he said. "*They* know it. They're even teaching it in their schools, but they think it's ended. It isn't. It's just beginning. And it has never lacked men who did not think of the danger. In the Czar's days—or at any other time."

She stopped and looked at him in the dusk, and said desperately, forgetting that she had met him for the first time but a few hours ago: "Oh, Sasha, is it worth the chance you're taking?"

He towered over her, strands of blond hair sticking out from under his old cap, his mouth grinning slowly over the raised collar of his coat. "You mustn't worry, Kira. And Irina mustn't worry. I'm not in danger. They won't get me. They won't have the time."

*

In the morning, Kira had to go to work.

She had insisted on working; Andrei had found a job for her—the job of lecturer and excursion guide in the Museum of the Revolution. The job consisted of sitting at home and waiting for a call from the Excursion Center. When they called, she hurried to the Museum and led a group of bewildered people through the halls of what had been the Winter Palace. She received a few rubles for each excursion; she was listed as a Soviet employee by the Upravdom of her house; it saved her from an exorbitant rent and from the suspicion of being bourgeois.

In the morning, she had telephoned the Nikolaevsky station; the train from the Crimea was not expected until early in the afternoon. Then the Excursion Center called her; she had to go.

The halls of the Winter Palace displayed faded photographs of revolutionary leaders, yellowed proclamations, maps, diagrams, models of Czarist prisons, rusty guns, splinters of leg irons. Thirty workers were waiting in the Palace lobby for the "comrade guide." They were on vacation, but their Educational Club had arranged the excursion and they could not ignore its command. They removed their caps respectfully,

It was an hour later that she heard steps behind the door, and the door was thrown open without a knock. The first thing she saw was a dusty suitcase. Then she saw the smile, the drooping lips arched over very white teeth in a tanned face. Then she stood with the back of her hand at her mouth and could not move.

He said: "Allo, Kira."

She did not kiss him. Her hands fell on his shoulders and moved down his arms, all her weight in her fingers, for she was sagging suddenly and her face was sliding slowly down his chest, down the cloth of his coat; and as he tried to lift her head, she pressed her mouth to his hand and held it; her shoulders jerked; she was sobbing.

"Kira, you little fool!"

He was laughing softly; his fingers caressed her hair; the fingers were trembling. He lifted her in his arms and carried her to the armchair, and sat down, holding her on his lap, forcing her lips to meet his.

"And that's the strong Kira who never cries. You shouldn't be so glad to see me, Kira. . . . Stop it, Kira. . . . You little fool. . . . My dearest, dearest . . ."

She tried to get up: "Leo. . . . You must take your coat off and . . ."

"Stay still."

He held her, and she leaned back, and she felt suddenly that she had no strength to lift her arms, that she had no strength ever to move again; and the Kira who despised femininity, smiled a tender, radiant, trusting smile, weaker than a woman's, the smile of a lost, bewildered child, her lashes heavy and sparkling with tears.

He looked at her, his eyes half-closed, and his glance was insulting in its open, mocking understanding of his power, a glance more voluptuous than a lover's caress.

Then he turned away and asked: "Was it terribly hard for you—this winter?"

"A little. But we don't have to talk about it. It's past. Do you cough any more, Leo?"

"No."

"And you're well? Quite, quite, completely well? Free to live again?"

"I am well—yes. As to living again. . . ."

He shrugged. His face was tanned, his arms were strong, his cheeks were not hollow any longer; but she noticed some-

III

In the afternoon, three days later, the door bell rang and Kira went to answer it.

She threw the door half-open, protected by a chain. On the stair-landing stood a heavy woman in a smart, expensive overcoat. Her face, slanting back from a prominent, pointed chin, was raised with a studied movement of graceful inquiry, revealing a stout, white neck; her full lips, smeared with a violent magenta, were half-open, revealing strong white teeth. Her hand poised on a broad expanse of green silk scarf, she drawled in a self-consciously gracious voice: "Does Leo Kovalensky live here?"

Kira looked incredulously at the diamond rings sparkling on the short, white fingers. She answered: "Why . . . yes."

She did not remove the chain; she stood staring at the woman. The woman said with a little accent of gentle firmness: "I want to see him."

Kira let her enter. The woman looked at Kira curiously, inquisitively, narrowing her eyes.

Leo rose with a surprised frown when they entered the room. The woman extended both hands to him in a dramatic greeting. "Leo! So delightful to see you again! I've remembered my threat to find you. I really intend to be a nuisance!"

Leo did not smile in answer to her expectant giggle; he bowed graciously; he said: "Kira, this is Antonina Pavlovna Platoshkina—Kira Alexandrovna Argounova."

"Oh! . . . *Argounova*? . . . Oh . . ." said Antonina Pavlovna, as if noting the fact that Kira's name was not Leo's; she sounded almost relieved. She extended her arm, in a straight line, her fingers drooping, as if she were giving her hand to a man and expecting him to kiss it.

"Antonina Pavlovna and I were neighbors in the sanatorium," Leo explained.

"And he was a perfectly ungracious neighbor, I must complain," Antonina Pavlovna laughed huskily. "He wouldn't wait for me—and I wanted so much to leave on the same train. And, Leo, you didn't give me your apartment number and I

had a perfectly terrible time trying to get it out of the Upravdom. Upravdoms are one of the unavoidable nuisances of our era, and all we of the intelligentsia can do is bear with it with a sense of humor."

She took off her coat. She wore a plain black dress of new, expensive silk in the latest fashion, and foreign earrings of green celluloid circles. Her hair was combed back severely off her forehead and two trim, sleek coils were flattened against her cheeks smeared with a very white powder. Her hair was an incredible orange, the color of a magnificent string of amber that swung like a pendulum, striking her stomach, when she moved. Her dress fitted tightly, slanting sharply from very wide hips down to heavy legs with very thin ankles and very small feet that seemed crushed under their disproportionate burden. She sat down and her stomach settled in a wide fold over her lap.

"When did you return, Tonia?" Leo asked.

"Yesterday. And oh, what a trip!" she sighed. "These Soviet trains! Really, I believe I lost everything I accomplished in the sanatorium. I was taking a rest cure for my nerves," she explained, pointing her chin at Kira. "And what sensitive person isn't a nervous wreck these days? But the Crimea! That place saved my life."

"It was beautiful," Leo agreed.

"But, really, it lost all its charm after you left, Leo. You know, he was the most charming patient in that dull sanatorium and everybody admired him so much—oh, purely platonically, my dear, if you're worried," she winked at Kira.

"I'm not," said Kira.

"Leo was so kind as to help me with my French lessons. I was learning . . . that is, brushing up on my French. It is such a relief, in these drab days, to stumble upon a person like Leo. You must forgive me, Leo. I realize that I may be an unwelcome guest, but it would be too much to expect of a woman if you asked her to give up a beautiful friendship in this revolting city where real people are so rare!"

"Why, no, Tonia, I'm glad you took the trouble to find me."

"Ah, these people here! I know so many of them. We meet, we talk, we shake hands. What does it mean? Nothing. Nothing but an empty physical gesture. Who among them knows the deeper significance of the spirit or the real meaning of our lives?"

Leo's slow, faint smile was not one of understanding—

said: "One could forget one's troubles in some engrossing activity—if it were permitted these days."

"How profoundly true! Of course, the modern woman of culture is organically incapable of remaining inactive. I have a tremendous program outlined for myself for this coming winter. I'm going to study. I propose to master ancient Egypt."

"What?" asked Kira.

"Ancient Egypt," said Antonina Pavlovna. "I want to recapture its spirit in all its entirety. There is a profound significance in these far-away cultures, a mysterious bond with the present, which we moderns do not appreciate fully. I am certain that in a former incarnation . . . You are not interested in theosophy, are you, Leo?"

"No."

"I can appreciate your viewpoint, of course, but I have given it a thorough study and a great deal of thought. There is a transcendental truth in it, an explanation for so many of the baffling phenomena of our existence. Of course, I have one of those natures that long for the mystical. However, you must not think me old-fashioned. You mustn't be surprised if I tell you that I'm studying political economy."

"You are, Tonia? Why?"

"One cannot be out of tune with one's time, you know. To criticize, we must understand. I find it surprisingly thrilling. There is a certain peculiar romance in labor and markets and machines. Apropos, have you read the latest volume of verse by Valentina Sirkina?"

"No, I haven't."

"Thoroughly delightful. Such depth of emotion, and yet—completely modern, so essentially modern! There is a verse about—how does it go?—about my heart is asbestos that remains cool over the blast-furnace of my emotions—or something like that—it is really superb."

"I must admit I don't read modern poets."

"I'll bring you that book, Leo. I know you'll understand and appreciate it. And I'm sure Kira Alexandrovna will enjoy it."

"Thank you," said Kira, "but I never read poetry."

"Indeed? How peculiar! I'm sure you care for music?"

"Fox-trots," said Kira.

"Really?" Antonina Pavlovna smiled condescendingly. When she smiled, her chin pointed further forward and her forehead slanted back; her lips opened slowly, uncomfortably, as if slithering apart. "Speaking of music," she turned to Leo,

"it is another essential item on my winter's program. I've made Koko promise me a box for every concert at the State Philharmony. Poor Koko! He's really very artistic at heart, if one knows how to approach him, but I'm afraid that his unfortunate early upbringing has not trained him for an appreciation of symphonic music. I shall, probably, have to be alone in my box. Oh—here's a happy thought!—you may share it with me, Leo. . . . And Kira Alexandrovna, of course," she nodded to Kira and turned to Leo again.

"Thank you, Tonia," he answered, "but I'm afraid we won't have much time for that, this winter."

"Leo, my dear!" she spread her arms in a wide gesture of sympathy, "don't you think I understand? Your financial position is. . . . Ah, these are not times for men like you. However, do not lose courage. With my connections . . . Koko cannot refuse me anything. He hated to see me leave for the Crimea. He missed me so much—you wouldn't believe how glad he was to see me back. He could not be more devoted if he were my husband. In fact, he couldn't be as devoted as he is. Marriage is an outmoded prejudice—as you know." She smiled at Kira.

"I'm sure the Crimea has helped your health," Leo said hastily, coldly.

"Ah, there's no other place like it! It is a bit of paradise. The dark, velvet sky, the diamond stars, the sea and the distant moonlight! You know, I've wondered why you remained so indifferent to its magic spell. I thought you were essentially romantic. Of course, I can understand the reason—"

She threw a swift glance at Kira. The glance found him seized and held by Kira's fixed eyes. Then, suddenly, his lips slithered into a cold smile and the warm glow of his face faded. "You men are strange creatures. To understand the science in itself and the first days of your life, you have mastered it thoroughly in the first class of your school. She sighed wearily, with a deprecating look. "The heroic officers of the White Army, the commissars." She laughed thinly. "Not? We are all modern men."

"Oh, how late it is! It's been so delightful that I haven't noticed the time at all. I must hurry home. Koko is probably getting melancholy without me, the poor child."

She opened her bag, took out a little mirror and, holding it delicately in two straight fingers, inspected her face carefully through narrowed eyes. She took out a little scarlet bottle with a tiny brush and smeared a purplish blot over her lips.

"Delightful stuff," she explained, showing the bottle to Kira, "infinitely better than lipstick. I notice you don't use much lipstick, Kira Alexandrovna. I would recommend it strongly. As woman to woman, one should never neglect one's appearance, you know. Particularly," she laughed, a friendly, intimate laughter, "particularly when one has such valuable property to guard."

At the door in the lobby, Antonina Pavlovna turned to Leo: "Don't worry about this coming winter, Leo. With my connections . . . Koko, of course, knows the highest . . . why, I'd be afraid to whisper some of the names he knows and . . . of course, Koko is putty in my hands. You must meet him, Leo. We can do a lot for you. I shall see to it that a magnificent young man like you is not lost in this Soviet swamp."

"Thank you, Tonia. I appreciate your offer. But I hope that I'm not quite lost—yet."

"Just what is his position?" Kira asked suddenly.

"Koko? He's assistant manager of the Food Trust—officially," Antonina Pavlovna winked mysteriously with a brief chuckle, lowering her voice; then, waving a hand with a diamond that flashed a swift spark in the light of an electric bulb, she drawled: "*Au revoir, mes amis*. I shall see you soon."

Slamming the chain over the door, Kira gasped: "Leo, I'm surprised!"

"By what?"

"That you can be acquainted with such an unspeakable . . ."

"I do not presume to criticize your friends."

They were passing through Marisha's room. In a corner by the window, Marisha raised her head from her book and looked at Leo curiously, startled by the tone of his voice. They crossed the room and Leo slammed the door behind them.

"You could have been civil, at least," he stated.

"What do you mean?"

"You could have said a couple of words—every other hour."

"She didn't come to hear me talk."

"I didn't invite her. And she's not a friend of mine. You didn't have to be so tragic about it."

"But, Leo, where did you pick that up?"

"That was in the same sanatorium and it happened to have foreign books, which is a rare treat when you have to spend your days reading Soviet trash. That's how we got acquainted. What's wrong with that?"

"But, Leo, don't you see what she's after?"

"Of course I do. Are you really afraid she'll get it?"

"Leo!"

"Well, then, why can't I speak to her? She's a harmless fool who's trying to amount to something. And she really does have connections."

"But to associate with that type of person. . . ."

"She's no worse than the Red trash one has to associate with, these days. And, at least, she's not Red."

"Well, as you wish."

"Oh, forget it, Kira. She'll never come again."

He was smiling at her, suddenly, warmly, his eyes bright, as if nothing had happened, and she surrendered, her hands on his shoulders, whispering: "Leo, don't you see? Nothing of that type should even dare to look at you."

He laughed, patting her cheek: "Let her look. It won't hurt me."

*

Leo had said: "Write to your uncle in Budapest at once. Thank him and tell him not to send us money any longer. I'm well. We'll struggle on our own. I have written down the exact sum of everything you sent me. Have you kept track of what you spent here, as I asked? We'll have to start repaying him—if he's patient, for the devil alone knows how long it will take."

She had whispered: "Yes, Leo," without looking at him.

He had noticed her gold wristwatch and frowned: "Where did that come from?"

She had said: "It's a present. From . . . Andrei Taganov."

"Oh, really? So you're accepting presents from him?"

"Leo!" She had whirled upon him defiantly, then she had pleaded: "Why not, Leo? It was my birthday and I couldn't hurt his feelings."

He had shrugged contemptuously: "Oh, I don't mind. It's your own business. Personally, I wouldn't feel comfortable wearing something paid for with G.P.U. money."

She had hidden the cigarette lighter, and the silk stockings, and the perfume. She had told Leo that the red dress had been

made for his return. He wondered why she did not like to wear it.

She spent most of her days in the halls of the Winter Palace, saying to the gaping excursionists: ". . . and it is the duty of every conscientious citizen to be acquainted with the history of our revolutionary movement in order to become a trained, enlightened fighter in the ranks of the World Revolution—our highest goal."

In the evenings, she tried to tell Leo: "I have to go out tonight. I've promised Irina . . ." or: "I really must go out tonight. It's a meeting of Excursion Workers." But he made her stay at home.

She looked into the mirror, sometimes, and wondered about the eyes people had told her were so clear, so honest.

She did not go out at night. She could not tear herself away. She could not satisfy the hunger of looking at him, of sitting silently, huddled in an armchair, watching him move across the room. She would watch the lines of his body as he stood at a window, turned away from her, his hands spread on his waistline, holding his back, his body leaning lightly backward against his hands, one tense, sunburned muscle of his neck showing under dark, dishevelled hair, thrilling as a suggestion, a promise of his face which she could not see. Then she would rise and walk hesitantly toward him and let her hand run slowly down the hard tendon of his neck, without a word, without a kiss.

Then she could think, with a cold wonder, of another man who was waiting for her somewhere.

But she knew that she had to see Andrei. One evening, she put on the red dress and told Leo that she had promised to call on her family.

"May I go with you?" he asked. "I haven't seen them since my return and I owe them a visit."

"No, not this time, Leo," she answered calmly. "I'd rather you wouldn't. Mother is . . . she's so changed . . . I know you won't get along with her."

"Do you have to go tonight, Kira? I hate to let you go and to stay here alone. I've been without you for such a long time."

"I've promised them I'd come tonight. I won't stay late. I'll be back soon."

She was putting on her coat when the door bell rang. It was Marisha who went to open the door and they heard Galina Petrovna's voice sweeping through the room, approach-

ing: "Well, I'm glad they're home. Well, if I thought they were visiting others and neglecting their old parents and . . ."

Galina Petrovna entered first; Lydia followed; Alexander Dimitrievitch shuffled in behind them.

"Leo, my dear child!" Galina Petrovna swept toward him and kissed him on both cheeks. "I'm so glad to see you! Welcome back to Leningrad."

Lydia shook hands limply; she removed her old hat, sat down heavily, as if collapsing, and fumbled with her hairpins: a long strand of hair was falling loosely out of the careless roll at the back of her neck. She was very pale and used no powder; her nose was shiny; she stared mournfully at the floor.

Alexander Dimitrievitch muttered: "I'm glad you're well, my boy," and patted Leo's shoulder uncertainly, with the timid, frightened look of an animal expecting to be hurt.

Kira faced them calmly and said with cold assurance: "Why did you come? I was just starting for your house, as I promised."

"As you . . ." Galina Petrovna began, but Kira interrupted:

"Well, since you're here, take your coats off."

"I'm so happy you're well again, Leo," said Galina Petrovna. "I feel as if you were my son. You really are my son. Everything else is just bourgeois prejudices."

"Mother!" Lydia remonstrated feebly, hopelessly.

Galina Petrovna settled down in a comfortable armchair. Alexander Dimitrievitch sat apologetically on the edge of a chair by the door.

"Thank you for coming," Leo smiled graciously. "My only excuse for neglecting to call, as I should have, is . . ."

"Kira," Galina Petrovna finished for him. "Do you know that we haven't seen her more than three times while you were away?"

"I have a letter for you, Kira," Lydia said suddenly.

"A letter?" Kira's voice jerked slightly.

"Yes. It came today."

There was no return address on the envelope ~~but the~~ handwriting. She threw the letter ~~indifferently~~ ~~down~~ on the table.

"Don't you want to open it?" Leo asked.

"No hurry," she said evenly. "Nothing important."

"Well, Leo?" Galina Petrovna's voice ~~became~~ ~~her~~ ~~voice~~ had become louder, clearer. "What are your plans for the winter? This is such an interesting year ~~with~~ ~~so~~ many opportunities, particularly for the ~~young~~."

"So many . . . what?" Leo asked.

"Such a wide field of activity! It's not like in the dying, decadent cities of Europe where people slave all their lives for measly wages and a pitiful little existence. Here—each one of us has an opportunity to be a useful, creative member of a stupendous whole. Here—one's work is not merely a wasted effort to satisfy one's petty hunger, but a contribution to the gigantic building of humanity's future."

"Mother," Kira asked, "who wrote all that down for you?"

"Really, Kira," Galina Petrovna drew her shoulders up, "you're not only impertinent to your mother, but I think you're also a bad influence on Leo's future."

"I wouldn't worry about that, Galina Petrovna," said Leo.

"And of course, Leo, I hope that you're modern enough to outlive the prejudices we've all shared. We must admit that the Soviet Government is the only progressive government in the world. It utilizes all its human resources. Even an old person like me, who has been useless all her life, can find an opportunity for creative toil. And as for young people like you . . ."

"Where are you working, Galina Petrovna?" Leo asked.

"Oh, don't you know? I'm teaching in a Labor School—they used to be called High Schools, you know. Sewing and fancy needlework. We all realize that a practical subject like sewing is much more important to our little future citizens than the dead, useless things, such as Latin, which were taught in the old bourgeois days. And our methods? We're centuries ahead of Europe. For instance, take the complex method that we're . . ."

"Mother," Lydia said wearily, "Leo may not be interested."

"Nonsense! Leo is a modern young man. Now, this method we're using at present. . . . For instance, what did they do in the old days? The children had to memorize mechanically so many dry, disjointed subjects—history, physics, arithmetic—with no connection between them at all. What do we do now? We have the complex method. Take last week, for instance. Our subject was Factory. So every teacher had to build his course around that central subject. In the history class they taught the growth and development of factories; in the physics class they taught all about machinery; the arithmetic teacher gave them problems about production and consumption; in the art class they drew factory interiors. And in my class—we made overalls and blouses. Don't you see the advantage of the method? The indelible impression it will leave in the children's

minds? Overalls and blouses—practical, concrete, instead of teaching them a lot of dry, theoretical seams and stitches."

Lydia's head drooped listlessly; she had heard it all many times.

"I'm glad you're enjoying your work, Galina Petrovna," said Leo.

"I'm glad you get your rations," said Kira.

"I do, indeed," Galina Petrovna stated proudly. "Of course, our distribution of commodities has not as yet reached a level of perfection and, really, the sunflower-seed oil I got last week was so rancid we couldn't use it . . . but then, this is a transitional period of . . ."

". . . State Construction!" Alexander Dimitrievitch yelled suddenly, hastily, as a well-memorized lesson.

"And what are you doing, Alexander Dimitrievitch?" Leo asked.

"Oh, I'm working!" Alexander Dimitrievitch jerked as if ready to jump forward, as if defending himself hastily against a dangerous accusation. "Yes, I'm working. I'm a Soviet employee. I am."

"Of course," Galina Petrovna drawled, "Alexander's position is not as responsible as mine. He's a bookkeeper in a district office somewhere way on the Vasilievsky Island—such a long trip every day!—and just what kind of an office is it, Alexander? But, anyway, he does have a bread card—though he doesn't get enough even for himself alone."

"But I'm working," Alexander Dimitrievitch said meekly.

"Of course," said Galina Petrovna, "I get better rations because I'm in a preferred class of pedagogues. I'm very socially. Why, do you know, Leo, that I've been assistant secretary of the Teachers' Council? It is ~~quite~~ that the present regime appreciates qualities of ~~character~~ even gave a speech on the methodology of ~~work~~ at an inter-club meeting where Lydia gave a ~~report~~ 'so beautifully' "

Kira rose wearily to make tea. She pumped the Primus and put the kettle on, and watched it thoughtfully—and through the hissing of the flame, Galina Petrovna's voice boomed loudly, rhythmically, as if addressing a class: "... yes, twice, imagine? Two honorable mentions in our students' Wall Newspaper, as one of the three most modern and conscientious pedagogues. . . . Yes, I do have some influence. When that insolent young teacher tried to run the school, she was dismissed fast enough. And you can be sure I had something to say about that. . . ."

Kira did not hear the rest. She was watching the letter on the table, wondering. When she heard a voice again, it was Lydia's and it was saying shrilly: "... spiritual consolation. I know. It has been revealed to me. There are secrets beyond our mortal minds. Holy Russia's salvation will come from faith. It has been predicted. Through patience and long suffering shall we redeem our sins. . . ."

Behind the door, Marisha wound her gramophone and played "John Gray." It was a new record and the swift little notes jerked gaily, clicking in sharp, short knocks.

*"John Gray
Was brave and daring,
Kitty
Was very pretty . . ."*

Kira sat, her chin in her hands, the glow of the Primus flame flickering under her nostrils, and she smiled suddenly, very softly, and said: "I like that song."

"That awful, vulgar thing, so overplayed that I'm sick of it?" Lydia gasped.

"Yes. . . . Even if it is overplayed. . . . It has such a nice rhythm . . . clicking . . . like rivets driven into steel. . . ." She was speaking softly, simply, a little helplessly, as she seldom spoke to her family. She raised her head and looked at them, and—they had never seen it before—her eyes were pleading and hurt.

"Still thinking of your engineering, aren't you?" asked Lydia.

"Sometimes . . ." Kira whispered.

"I can't understand what's wrong with you, Kira," Galina Petrovna boomed. "You're never satisfied. You have a perfectly good job, easy and well-paid, and you mope over some child-

Kira dearest,

Please forgive me for writing. But won't you telephone me?

Andrei

*

She led two excursions on the following day. Coming home, she told Leo that she would be dismissed if she did not attend a guides' meeting that evening. She put on her red dress. On the stair-landing, she kissed Leo lightly, as he stood watching her go; she waved to him, vaulting down the stairs, with a cold, gay chuckle. On a street corner, she opened her purse, took out the little French bottle and pressed a few drops of perfume into her hair. She leaped into a tramway at full speed and stood hanging onto a leather strap, watching the lights swim past. When she got off, she walked, lightly, swiftly, with a cold, precise determination, toward the palace that was a Party Club.

She ran soundlessly up the crumbling marble stairway of the pavilion. She knocked sharply at the door.

When Andrei opened the door, she laughed, kissing him: "I know, I know, I know. . . . Don't say it . . . I want to be forgiven first, and then I'll explain."

He whispered happily: "You're forgiven. You don't have to explain."

She did not explain. She did not let him utter a complaint. She whirled around the room, and he tried to catch her, and the cloth of her coat felt cold in his hands, cold and fragrant of summer night air. He could whisper only: "Do you know that it's been two weeks since . . ." But he did not finish the sentence.

Then she noticed that he was dressed for the street. "Were you going out, Andrei?"

"Oh . . . yes, I was, but it's not important."

"Where were you going?"

"Just to a Party Cell meeting."

"A Party Cell meeting? And you say it's not important? But you can't miss that."

"Yes, I can. I'm not going."

"Andrei, I'd rather come tomorrow and let you . . ."

"No."

"Well, then, let's go out together. Take me to the European roof."

"Tonight?"

"Yes. Now."

He did not want to refuse. She did not want to notice the look in his eyes.

They sat at a white table in the roof garden on top of the European Hotel. They sat in a dim corner, and they could see nothing of the long room but the naked white back of a woman a few tables away, with a little strand of golden hair curling at the nape of her neck, escaping from the trim, lustrous waves of her coiffure, with a little golden shadow between her shoulder blades, her long fingers holding a glass with a liquid the color of her hair, swaying slowly; and beyond the woman, beyond a haze of yellow lights and bluish, rippling smoke, an orchestra played fox-trots from "Bajadere," and the violinists swayed to the rhythm of the golden glass.

Andrei said: "It's been two weeks, Kira, and . . . and you probably need it." He slipped a roll of bills into her hand, his monthly salary.

She whispered, pushing it back, closing his fingers over the bills: "No, Andrei. . . . Thank you. . . . But I don't need it. And . . . and I don't think I'll need it again. . . ."

"But . . ."

"You see, I get so many excursions to lead, and mother got more classes at the school, and we all have clothes and everything we need, so that . . ."

"But, Kira, I want you to . . ."

"Please, Andrei! Don't let's argue. Not about that. . . . Please. . . . Keep it. . . . If . . . if I need it, I'll tell you."

"Promise?"

"Yes."

The violins rumbled dully, heavily, and suddenly the music burst out like a firecracker, so that the swift, laughing ~~noise~~ could almost be seen as sparks shooting to the ceiling.

"You know," said Kira, "I shouldn't ask you to bring me here. It's not a place for you. But I like it. It's only a ~~man-~~ture and a very poor little one at that, but still it's a ~~sample~~ of what Europe is. Do you know that music they're playing? It's from 'Bajadere.' I saw it. They're playing it in Europe too. Like here . . . almost like here."

"Kira," Andrei asked, "that Leo Kovalsky, is he in love with you or something?"

She looked at him, and the reflection of an electric light stood still as two sparks in her eyes and as a bright line ran on her patent leather collar. "Why do you ask that?"

"I saw your cousin, Victor Danasov, at a ~~club~~ meeting ~~and~~

he told me that Leo Kovalensky was back, and he smiled as if the news should mean something to me. I didn't even know that Kovalensky had been away."

"Yes, he's back. He's been away somewhere in the Crimea, for his health, I think. I don't know whether he's in love with me, but Victor was in love with me once, and he's never forgiven me for that."

"I see. I don't like that man."

"Victor?"

"Yes. And Leo Kovalensky, too. I hope you don't see him often. I don't trust that type of man."

"Oh, I see him occasionally."

The orchestra had stopped playing.

"Andrei, ask them to play something for me. Something I like. It's called the 'Song of Broken Glass.'"

He watched her as the music burst out again, splattering sparks of sound. It was the gayest music he had ever heard; and he had never seen her look sad; but she sat, motionless, staring helplessly, her eyes forlorn, bewildered.

"It's very beautiful, this music, Kira," he whispered, "why do you look like that?"

"It's something I liked . . . long ago . . . when I was a child. . . . Andrei, did you ever feel as if something had been promised to you in your childhood, and you look at yourself and you think 'I didn't know, then, that this is what would happen to me'—and it's strange, and funny, and a little sad?"

"No, I was never promised anything. There were so many things that I didn't know, then, and it's so strange to be learning them now. . . . You know, the first time I brought you here, I was ashamed to enter. I thought it was no place for a Party man. I thought . . ." he laughed softly, apologetically, "I thought I was making a sacrifice for you. And now I like it."

"Why?"

"Because I like to sit in a place where I have no reason to be, no reason but to sit and look at you across the table. Because I like those lights on your collar. Because you have a very stern mouth—and I like that—but when you listen to that music, your mouth is gay, as if it were listening, too. And all those things, they have no meaning for anyone on earth but me, and when I've lived a life where every hour had to have a purpose, and suddenly I discover what it's like to feel things that have no purpose but myself, and I see suddenly how sacred a purpose that can be, so that I can't even argue, I can't doubt, I can't fight it, and I know, then, that a

life is possible whose only justification is my own joy—then everything, everything else suddenly seems very different to me."

She whispered: "Andrei, you shouldn't talk like that. I feel as if I were taking you away from your own life, from everything that has been your life."

"Don't you want to feel it?"

"But doesn't it frighten you? Don't you think sometimes that it may bring you to a choice you have no right to make?"

He answered with so quiet a conviction that the word sounded light, unconcerned, with a calm beyond earnestness: "No." He leaned toward her across the table, his eyes serene, his voice soft and steady: "Kira, you look frightened. And, really, you know, it's not a serious question. I've never had many questions to face in my life. People create their own questions, because they're afraid to look straight. All you have to do is look straight and see the road, and when you see it, don't sit looking at it—walk. I joined the Party because I knew I was right. I love you because I know I'm right. In a way, you and my work are the same. Things are really very simple."

"Not always, Andrei. You know your road. I don't belong on it."

"That's not in the spirit of what you taught me."

She whispered helplessly: "What did I teach you?"

The orchestra was playing the "Song of Broken Glass." No one sang it. Andrei's voice sounded like the words of that music. He was saying: "You remember, you said once that we had the same root somewhere in both of us, because we both believed in life? It's a rare capacity and it can't be taught. And it can't be explained to those in whom that word—life—doesn't awaken the kind of feeling that a temple does, or a military march, or the statue of a perfect body. It is for that feeling that I joined a Party which, at the time, could lead me only to Siberia. It is for that feeling that I wanted to fight against the most senseless and useless of monsters standing in the way of human life—and that's something we call now humanity's politics. And so my own existence was only the fight and the future. You taught me the present."

She made a desperate attempt. She said slowly, watching him: "Andrei, when you told me you loved me, for the first time, you were hungry. I wanted to satisfy that hunger."

"And that's all?"

"That's all."

He laughed quietly, so quietly that she had to give up. "You don't know what you're saying, Kira. Women like you don't love *only* like that."

"What are women like me?"

"What temples are, and military marches, and . . ."

"Let's have a drink, Andrei."

"*You* want a drink?"

"Yes. Now."

"All right."

He ordered the drinks. He watched the glow of the glass at her lips, a long, thin, shivering line of liquid light between fingers that looked golden in its reflection. He said: "Let's drink a toast to something I could never offer but in a place like this: to my life."

"Your new life?"

"My only one."

"Andrei, what if you lose it?"

"I can't lose it."

"But so many things can happen. I don't want to hold your life in my hands."

"But you're holding it."

"Andrei, you must think . . . once in a while . . . that it's possible that . . . What if anything should happen to me?"

"Why think about it?"

"But it's possible."

She felt suddenly as if the words of his answer were the links of a chain she would never be able to break: "It's also possible for every one of us to have to face a death sentence some day. Does it mean that we have to prepare for it?"

IV

They left the roof garden early, and Kira asked Andrei to take her home; she was tired; she did not look at him.

He said: "Certainly, dearest," and called a cab, and let her sit silently, her head on his shoulder, while he held her hand and kept silent, not to disturb her.

He left her at her parents' house. She waited on a dark stair-landing and heard his cab driving away: she waited

longer; for ten minutes, she stood in the darkness, leaning against a cold glass pane; beyond the pane there was a narrow airshaft and a bare brick wall with one window; in the window, a yellow candle shivered convulsively and the huge shadow of a woman's arm kept rising and falling, senselessly, monotonously.

After ten minutes, Kira walked downstairs and hurried to a tramway.

Passing through Marisha's room, she heard a stranger's voice behind the door of her own room, a slow, deep, drawling voice that paused carefully, meticulously on every letter "o" and then rolled on as if on buttered hinges. She threw the door open.

The first person she saw was Antonina Pavlovna in a green brocaded turban, pointing her chin forward inquisitively; then she saw Leo; then she saw the man with the drawling voice—and her eyes froze, while he lumbered up, throwing at her a swift glance of appraisal and suspicion.

"Well, Kira, I thought you were spending the night with the excursion guides. And you said you'd be back early," Leo greeted her sharply, while Antonina Pavlovna drawled:

"Good evening, Kira Alexandrovna."

"I'm sorry. I got away as soon as I could," Kira answered, her eyes staring at the stranger's face.

"Kira, may I present? Karp Karpovitch Morozov—Kira Alexandrovna Argounova."

She did not notice that Karp Karpovitch's big fist was shaking her hand. She was looking at his face. His face had large blond freckles, light, narrow eyes, a heavy red mouth and a short nose with wide, vertical nostrils. She had seen it twice before; she remembered the speculator of the Nikolaevsky station, the food trader of the market.

She stood without removing her coat, without saying a word, cold with a feeling of sudden, inexplicable panic.

"What's the matter, Kira?" Leo asked.

"Leo, haven't we met Citizen Morozov before?"

"I don't believe so."

"Never had the pleasure, Kira Alexandrovna," Morozov drawled, his eyes at once shrewd and naïve and complacently friendly.

While Kira was removing her coat slowly, he turned to Leo: "And the store, Lev Sergeievitch, we'll have it in the neighborhood of the Kouznetzky market. Best neighborhood. I have my eyes on a vacant store—just what we

window, narrow room—not many square meters to pay for—and I slipped a couple of tens to the Upravdom, and he'll let us have a good, big basement thrown in—just what we need. I can take you there tomorrow, you'll be most pleased."

Kira's coat dropped to the floor. A lamp stood on the table; in its glow, she could see Morozov's face leaning toward Leo's, his slow words muffled on his heavy lips to a sly, guilty whisper. She stared at Leo. He was not looking at her; his eyes were cold, widened slightly by a strange eagerness. She stood in the semi-darkness, beyond the circle of lamp light. The men paid no attention to her. Antonina Pavlovna threw a slow, expressionless glance at her and turned to the table, flicking ashes off her cigarette.

"How's the Upravdom?" Leo asked.

"Couldn't be better," Morozov chuckled. "A friendly fellow, easy-going and . . . practical. A few ten-ruble bills and some vodka once in a while—with careful handling, he won't cost us much. I told him to have the store cleaned for you. And we'll order new signs—'Lev Kovalensky. Food Products.'"

"What are you talking about?" Kira threw the words at Morozov with the violence of a slap in the face. She stood over him, the lamp light scattering broken shadows across her face. Morozov leaned away from her, closer to the table, startled.

"It's a little business deal we're discussing, Kira Alexandrovna," he explained in a soft, conciliating drawl.

"I've promised you that Koko would do a great deal for Leo," Antonina Pavlovna smiled.

"Kira, I'll explain later," Leo said slowly. The words were a command.

Silently, she pulled a chair to the table and sat facing Morozov, leaning forward on her crossed elbows. Morozov continued, trying not to look at her fixed eyes that seemed to register his every word: "You understand the advantage of the arrangement, Lev Sergeievitch. A private trader is no easy title to bear these days. Consider the rent on your living quarters, for instance. That alone could swallow all the profits. Now if we say you're the sole owner—well, the rent won't be so much since you have just this one room here to pay for. Now me, for instance, we have three large rooms, Tonia and me, and if they brand me a private trader—Good Lord Almighty!—the rent on that will wreck the whole business."

"That's all right," said Leo. "I'll carry it. I don't mind if

I'm called private trader or Nicholas II or Mephistopheles."

"That's it," Morozov chuckled too loudly, his chin and stomach shaking. "That's it. And, Lev Sergeievitch, sir, you won't regret it. The profits—Lord bless us!—the profits will make the old what-they-called-bourgeois look like beggars. With our little scheme, we'll sweep in the rubles, easy as picking 'em off the street. A year or two and we're our own masters. A few hundreds slipped where necessary and we can fly abroad—to Paris, or Nice or Monte Carlo, or any of the foreign places that are pleasant and artistic."

"Yes," said Leo wearily. "Abroad." Then he shook his head, as if breaking off an unbearable thought, and turned imperiously, throwing orders to the man who was hiring him: "But that friend of yours—the Communist—that's the danger point of the whole scheme. Are you sure of him?"

Morozov spread his fat arms wide, shaking his head gently, reproachfully, his smile as soothing as Vaseline: "Lev Sergeievitch, soul of mine, you don't think I'm a helpless babe making my first steps in business, do you? I'm as sure of him as of the eternal salvation of our souls, that's how sure I am. He's as smart a young man as ever you could hope to find. Quick and reasonable. And not one of those windbags that like to hear themselves talk. He's not aiming to get nothing but big words and dried herring out of his life, no, sir. He knows when he has bread and butter in his hands—and he won't let it slip through. And then again, he's the one who takes the big chance. One of us common folks, if caught, might wiggle out with ten years in Siberia, but for one of them Party men—it's the firing squad and no time to say good-bye."

"You don't have to worry, Leo," Antonina Pavlovna smiled, "I've met the young man. We entertained him at a little tea—champagne and caviar, to be exact. He is smart and thoroughly dependable. You can have absolute faith in Koko's business judgment."

"And it's not so difficult for him, either," Morozov lowered his voice to a barely audible whisper. "He's got one of those engineering positions with the railroad—and he's got pull in all directions, like a river with tributaries. All he has to do is see that the food shipment is damaged a bit—dropped accidentally, or dampened a little, or something—and see that it's pronounced worthless. That's all. The rest is simple. The shipment goes quietly to the basement of our little store—Lev Kovalensky. Food Products.' Nothing suspicious is

there?—just supplies for the store. The State co-operatives are short a load of stuff and the good citizens get nothing on their ration cards but an excuse and a promise. We wait a couple of weeks and we break up the load and ship it to our own customers—private dealers all over three provinces, a whole net of them, reasonable and discreet—I have all the addresses. And that's all. Who has to know? If anyone comes snooping around the store—well, we'll have some punk clerk there and he'll sell them half a pound of butter if they ask for it, and that's all we're doing, for all they know—retail trade—open and legal."

"And furthermore . . ." Antonina Pavlovna whispered, "if anything should go wrong, that young Communist has . . ."

"Yes," Morozov whispered, and looked around furtively, and paused to listen for any suspicious sound from behind the door, and, reassured, murmured, his lips at Leo's ear: "He has connections in the G.P.U. A powerful friend and protector. I'd be scared to mention the name."

"Oh, we'll be safe from that quarter," Leo said contemptuously, "if we have enough money."

"Money? Why, Lev Sergeievitch, soul of mine, we'll have so much money you'll be rolling ten-ruble bills to make cigarettes. We split it three ways, you understand; me, yourself and the Communist pal. We'll have to slip a little to his friends at the railroad, and to the Upravdom, and we'll pay your rent here—that'll go under expenses. But then you must remember that on the face of it, you're the sole owner. It's your store, in your name. I have my position with the State Food Trust to think about. If I had a private store registered to my name, they'd kick me out. And I've got to keep that job. You can see how useful it will be to us."

He winked at Leo. Leo did not smile in answer, but said: "You don't have to worry. I'm not afraid."

"Then, it's settled, eh? Why, pal, in a month from now you won't believe you ever lived like this. You'll put some flesh on those sunken cheeks of yours, and some pretty clothes on Kira Alexandrovna, and a diamond bracelet or two, and then maybe a motor-car and . . ."

"Leo, are you insane?"

Kira's chair clattered against the wall, and the lamp rocked and settled, shivering with a thin, glassy tinkle. She stood, the three startled faces turned to her.

"This isn't a joke you're playing on me, is it? Or have you lost your mind entirely?"

Leo leaned back slowly, looking straight at her, and asked coldly: "When did you assume the privilege of talking to me like that?"

"Leo! If that's a new way of committing suicide, there are much simpler ones!"

"Really, Kira Alexandrovna, you are unnecessarily tragic about it," Antonina Pavlovna remarked coolly.

"Now, now, Kira Alexandrovna, soul of mine," Morozov said amicably, "sit down and calm yourself and let's talk it over quietly. There's nothing to be excited about."

She cried: "Leo, don't you see what they're doing? You're nothing but a living screen for them! They're investing money. You're investing your life!"

"I'm glad to find some use for it," Leo said evenly.

"Leo, listen, I'll be calm. Here. I'll sit down. Listen to me: you don't want to do a thing like that with your eyes closed. Look at it, think it over: you know how hard life is these days. You don't want to make it harder, do you? You know the government we're facing. It's difficult enough to keep from under its wheels. Do you want to invite it to grind you? Don't you know that it's the firing squad for anyone caught in a crooked, criminal speculation?"

"I believe Leo has made it clear that he did not need advice," said Antonina Pavlovna, holding her cigarette poised gracefully in mid-air.

"Kira Alexandrovna," Morozov protested, "why use such strong names for a simple business proposition which is perfectly permissible and almost legal and . . ."

"You keep quiet," Leo interrupted him and turned to Kira. "Listen, Kira, I know that this is as rotten and crooked a deal as could be made. And I know I'm taking a chance on my life. And I still want to do it. You understand?"

"Even if I begged you not to?"

"Nothing you can say will change things. It's a filthy, low, disgraceful business. Certainly. But who forced me into it? Do you think I'll spend the rest of my life crawling, begging for a job, starving, dying slowly? I've been back two weeks. Have I found work? Have I found a promise of work? So they shoot food speculators? Why don't they give us a chance at something else? You don't want me to risk my life. And what is my life? I have no career. I have no future. I couldn't do what Victor Dunaev is doing if I were boiled ~~in~~ for punishment! I'm not risking much when I risk m

"Lev Sergeievitch, soul of mine," Morozov sighed with admiration, "how you can talk!"

"You two can go now," Leo ordered. "I'll see you tomorrow, Morozov, and we'll look at the store."

"Indeed, Leo, I'm surprised," Antonina Pavlovna remarked, rising with dignity. "If you let yourself be influenced and do not seem to be gracious about appreciating an opportunity, when I thought you'd be grateful and . . ."

"Who's to be grateful?" he threw at her sharply, rudely. "You need me and I need you. It's a business deal. That's all."

"Sure, sure, that's what it is," said Morozov, "and I appreciate your help, Lev Sergeievitch. It's all right, Tonia, soul of mine, you come along now and we'll settle all the details tomorrow."

He spread his legs wide apart and got up with effort, his hands leaning on his knees. His heavy stomach shivered when he moved, making his body seem uncomfortably close and apparent under the wrinkles of his suit.

At the door, he turned to Leo: "Well, Lev Sergeievitch, shall we shake on it? We can't sign a contract, of course, you understand, but we'll depend on your word."

His mouth arched contemptuously, Leo extended his hand, as if the gesture were a victory over himself. Morozov shook it warmly, lengthily—and bowed low, in the old peasant manner, on his way out. Antonina Pavlovna followed without looking at Kira.

Leo accompanied them to the lobby. When he came back, Kira still stood as he had left her. He said before she had turned to him: "Kira, we won't argue about it."

"There's only one thing, Leo," she whispered, "and I couldn't say it in front of them. You said you had nothing left in life. I thought you had . . . me."

"I haven't forgotten it. And that's one of the reasons for what I'm doing. Listen, do you think I'm going to live off you for the rest of my days? Do you think I'm going to stand by and watch you dragging excursions and swallowing soot over the Primus? That fool Antonina doesn't have to lead excursions. She wouldn't wear your kind of dresses to scrub floors in—only she doesn't have to scrub floors. Well, you won't have to, either. You poor little fool! You don't know what life can be. You've never seen it. But you're going to see it. And I'm going to see it before they finish me. Listen, if I knew for certain that it's the firing squad in six months—I'd still do it!"

She leaned against the table, because she felt faint. She whispered: "Leo, if I begged you, for all of my love for you, for all of yours, if I told you that I'd bless every hour of every excursion, every floor I'd scrub, every demonstration I'd have to attend, and every Club, and every red flag—if only you wouldn't do this—would you still do it?"

He answered: "Yes."

*

Citizen Karp Morozov met Citizen Pavel Syerov in a restaurant. They sat at a table in a dark corner. Citizen Morozov ordered cabbage soup. Citizen Syerov ordered tea and French pastry. Then Citizen Morozov leaned forward and whispered through the soup steam: "All settled, Pavlusha. I got the man. Saw him yesterday."

Pavel Syerov held his cup at his lips, and his pale mouth barely moved, so that Morozov guessed rather than heard the question: "Who?"

"Lev Kovalensky is the name. Young. Hasn't got a brass coin in the world and doesn't give a damn. Desperate. Ready for anything."

The white lips formed without sound: "Dependable?"

"Thoroughly."

"Easy to handle?"

"Like a child."

"Will keep his mouth shut?"

"Like a tomb."

Morozov unloaded a heavy spoonful of cabbage into his mouth; one strand remained hanging out; he drew it in with a resounding smack. He leaned closer and breathed: "Besides, he's got a social past. Father executed for counter-revolution. In case of anything . . . he'll be the right person to blame. A treacherous aristocrat, you know."

Syerov whispered: "All right." His spoon cut into a chocolate éclair, and a soft, yellow custard spurted, spreading over his plate. He hissed through white lips, low, even sounds without expression: "Now listen here. I want my share in advance—on every load. I don't want any delays. I don't want to ask twice."

"So help me God, Pavlusha, you'll get it, you don't have to tell me, you . . ."

"And another thing, I want caution. Understand
From now on, you don't know me, see? If we meet

—we're strangers. Antonina delivers the money to me in that whorehouse, as agreed."

"Sure. Sure. I remember everything, Pavlusha."

"Tell that Kovalensky bum to keep away. I don't want to meet him."

"Sure. You don't have to."

"Got the store?"

"Renting it today."

"All right. Now sit still. I go first. You sit here for twenty minutes. Understand?"

"Sure. The Lord bless us."

"Keep that for yourself. Good day."

*

A secretary sat at a desk in the office of the railroad terminal. She sat behind a low wooden railing and typed, concentrating intently, drawing her upper lip in and biting her lower one. In front of the railing, there was an empty stretch of unswept floor and two chairs; six visitors waited patiently, two of them sitting. A door behind the secretary was marked: 'Comrade Syerov.'

Comrade Syerov returned from lunch. He strode swiftly through the outer office, his tight, shiny military boots creaking. The six heads of the visitors jerked anxiously, following him with timid, pleading glances. He crossed the room as if it were empty. The secretary followed him into his inner office.

A picture of Lenin hung on the wall of the inner office, over a broad, new desk; it hung between a diagram showing the progress of the railroads, and a sign with red letters saying: COMRADES, STATE YOUR BUSINESS BRIEFLY. PROLETARIAN EFFICIENCY IS THE DISCIPLINE OF PEACE-TIME REVOLUTIONARY CONSTRUCTION.

Pavel Syerov took a flat, gold cigarette case from his pocket, lighted a cigarette, sat down at the desk and looked through a stack of papers. The secretary stood waiting diffidently.

Then he raised his head and asked: "What's doing?"

"There are those citizens outside, Comrade Syerov, waiting to see you."

"What about?"

"Mostly jobs."

"Can't see anyone today. Got to hurry to the Club meeting in half-an-hour. Have you typed my Club report on 'Railroads as the blood vessels of the Proletarian State?'"

"Yes, Comrade Syerov. Here it is."

"Fine."

"Those citizens out there, Comrade Syerov, they've been waiting for three hours."

"Tell them to go to hell. They can come tomorrow. If anything important comes up, call me at the Railroad Workers' Union headquarters. I'll be there after the Club. . . . And, by the way, I'll be in late tomorrow."

"Yes, Comrade Syerov."

*

Pavel Syerov walked home from the Railroad Workers' Union headquarters, with a Party friend. Syerov was in a cheerful mood. He whistled merrily and winked at passing girls. He said: "Think I'm going to throw a party tonight. Haven't had any fun for three weeks. Feel like dissipating. What do you say?"

"Swell," said the friend.

"Just a little crowd, our own bunch. At my place?"

"Swell."

"I know a fellow who can get vodka—the real stuff. And let's go to Des Gourmets and buy up everything they have in the joint."

"I'm with you, pal."

"Let's celebrate."

"What'll we celebrate?"

"Never mind. Just celebrate. And we don't have to worry about expenses. Hell! I'm not worrying about expenses when I want a good time."

"That's right, comrade."

"Whom'll we call? Let's see: Grishka and Maxim, with their girls."

"And Lizaveta."

"Sure, I'll call your Lizaveta. And Valka Dourova—there's a girl!—she'll bring half a dozen fellows along. And, I guess, Victor Dunaev with his girl, Marisha Lavrova. Victor's a nit that's going to be a big louse some day—have to keep on the good side of him. And . . . say, pal, do you think I should invite Comrade Sonia?"

"Sure. Why not?"

"Oh, hell. That cow's after me. Has been for over a year. Trying to make me. And I'll be damned if I . . . No appetite."

"But then, Pavlusha, you've got to be careful. If you hurt her feelings, with Comrade Sonia's position . . .

"I know. Hell! Two profunions and five women's clubs wrapped around her little finger. Oh, hell! Oh, all right. I'll call her."

*

Pavel Syerov had pulled the curtains down over the three windows of his room. One of the girls had draped an orange scarf over the lamp, and it was almost dark. The guests' faces were whitish blots strewn over the chairs, the davenport, the floor. In the middle of the floor stood a dish with a chocolate cake from Des Gourmets; someone had stepped on the cake. A broken bottle lay on the pillow of Syerov's bed; Victor and Marisha sat on the bed. Victor's hat lay on the floor by the davenport; it was being used as an ashtray. A gramophone played "John Gray"; the record was stuck, whirling, repeating persistently the same hoarse, grating notes; no one noticed it. A young man sat on the floor, leaning against a bed post, trying to sing; he muttered a tuneless, mournful chant into his collar; once in a while, he jerked his head up and screeched a high note, so that the others shuddered and someone flung a shoe at a pillow at him, yelling: "Grishka, shut up!" Then his head drooped again. A girl lay in a corner, by the cuspidor, asleep, her hair glued in sticky strands to a glistening, flushed face.

Pavel Syerov staggered across the room, waving an empty bottle, muttering in an offended, insistent voice: "A drink. . . . Who wants a drink? . . . Doesn't anyone want a drink? . . ."

"Hell, Pavel, your bottle's empty. . . ." someone called from the darkness.

He stopped, swaying, held the bottle up to the light, spat, and threw the bottle under the bed. "So you think I haven't any more?" he waved his fist menacingly at the room. "Think I'm a piker, don't you? . . . A measly piker who can't afford enough vodka? . . . A measly piker, that's what you think, don't you? . . . Well, I'll show you . . . I'll show you who can't afford things. . . . I'll show you. . . ."

He fumbled in a box under the table and rose, swaying, brandishing an unopened bottle over his head. He laughed: "I can't afford it, can I?" and reeled toward the corner from where the voice had come. He giggled at the white spots that turned to look up at him; he swung the bottle in a huge circle and brought it down to smash with a ringing blast against a book case. A girl screamed; glass splattered in a tinkling rain. A man swore violently.

"My stockings, Pavel, my stockings!" the girl sobbed, pulling her skirt high over drenched legs.

A man's arms reached for her from the darkness: "Never mind, sweetheart. Take 'em off."

Syerov giggled triumphantly: "So I can't afford it, can I? . . . Can I? . . . Pavel Syerov can afford anything now! . . . Anything on this God-damn earth! . . . He can buy you all, guts and souls!"

Someone had crawled under the table and was fumbling in the box, looking for more bottles.

A hand knocked at the door.

"Come in!" roared Syerov. No one came in. The hand knocked again. "What the hell? What do you want?" He tottered to the door and threw it open.

His next-door neighbor, a fat, pallid woman, stood in the corridor, shivering in a long, flannel nightgown, clutching an old shawl over her shoulders, brushing strands of gray hair out of her sleepy eyes.

"Citizen Syerov," she whined with indignation, "won't you please stop that noise? At such an indecent hour . . . you young people have no shame left these days . . . no fear of God . . . no . . ."

"On your way, grandma, on your way!" Syerov ordered. "You crawl under your pillow and keep your damn mouth shut. Or would you like to take a ride to the G.P.U?"

The woman wheeled about hastily and shuffled away, making the sign of the cross.

Comrade Sonia sat in a corner by the window, smoking. She wore a tailored khaki tunic with pockets on her hips and breast; it was made of expensive foreign cloth, but she kept dropping ashes on her skirt. A girl's voice pleaded in a plaintive whisper at her elbow: "Say, Sonia, why did you have Dashka fired from the office? She needed the job, she did, and honest . . ."

"I do not discuss business matters outside of office hours," Comrade Sonia answered coldly. "Besides, my actions are always motivated by the good of the collective."

"Oh, sure, I don't doubt it, but, listen, Sonia. . . ."

Comrade Sonia noticed Pavel Syerov swaying at the door. She rose and walked to him, cutting the girl off in the middle of a sentence.

"Come here, Pavel," said Comrade Sonia, her strong arm supporting him, leading him to a chair. "You'd better sit down. Here. Let me make you comfortable."

"You're a pal, Sonia," he muttered, while she stuffed a pillow between his shoulder blades, "you're a real pal. Now you wouldn't holler at me if I made a little noise, would you?"

"Of course not."

"You don't think that I can afford a little vodka, like some skunks here think, do you, Sonia?"

"Of course not, Pavel. Some people don't know how to appreciate you."

"That's it. That's just the trouble. I'm not appreciated. I'm a great man. I'm going to be a very great man. But they don't know it. No one knows it. . . . I'm going to be a very, very powerful man. I'm going to make the foreign capitalists look like mice. . . . That's what: mice. . . . I'm going to give orders to Comrade Lenin himself."

"Pavel, our great chief is dead."

"That's right. So he is. Comrade Lenin's dead. . . . Oh, what's the use? . . . I've got to have a drink, Sonia. I feel very sad. Comrade Lenin's dead."

"That's very nice of you, Pavel. But you'd better not have another drink just now."

"But I'm very sad, Sonia. No one appreciates me."

"I do, Pavel."

"You're a pal. You're a real, real pal, Sonia. . . ."

On the bed, Victor held Marisha in his arms. She giggled, counting the buttons on his tunic; she lost count after the third one and started over again. She was whispering: "You're a gentleman, Victor, that's what you are, a gentleman. . . . That's why I love you, because you're a gentleman. . . . And I'm only a gutter brat. My mother, she was a cook before . . . before. . . . Well, anyway, before. I remember, many, many years ago, she used to work in a big, big house, they had horses and carriages and a bathroom, and I used to peel vegetables for her, in their kitchen. And there was an elegant young man, their son, oh, he had such pretty uniforms and he spoke all sorts of foreign languages, he looked just like you. And I didn't even dare to look at him. And now I have a gentleman of my own," she giggled happily, "isn't it funny? I, Marishka the vegetable peeler!"

Victor said: "Oh, shut up!" and kissed her, his head drooping sleepily.

A girl giggled, standing over them in the darkness: "When are you two going to get registered at the marriage office?"

"Go 'way," Marisha waved at her. "We'll be registered. We're engaged."

Comrade Sonia had pulled a chair close to Syerov's, and he sprawled, his head on her lap, while she stroked his hair. He was muttering: "You're a rare woman, Sonia. . . . You're a wonderful woman. . . . You understand me. . . ."

"I do, Pavel. I've always said that you were the most talented, the most brilliant young man in our collective."

"You're a wonderful woman, Sonia." He was kissing her, moaning: "No one appreciates me."

He had pulled her down to the floor, leaning over her soft, heavy body, whispering: "A fellow needs a woman. . . . A smart, understanding, strong and hefty woman. . . . Who cares for those skinny scarecrows? . . . I like a woman like you, Sonia. . . ."

He did not know how he found himself suddenly in the little storage closet between his room and that of his neighbors. A cobwebbed window high under the ceiling threw a dusty ray of moonlight on a towering pile of boxes and baskets. He was leaning against Comrade Sonia's shoulder, stammering: "They think Pavel Syerov's just gonna be another stray mongrel eating outta slop pails all his life. . . . Well, I'll show 'em! Pavel Syerov'll show 'em who's got the whip. . . . I've got a secret . . . a great secret, Sonia. . . . But I can't tell you. . . . But I've always liked you, Sonia. . . . I've always needed a woman like you, Sonia . . . soft and comfortable. . . ."

When he tried to stretch himself on the flat top of a large wicker basket, the piled tower shuddered, swayed and came down with a thundering crash. The neighbors knocked furiously, protesting, against the wall.

Comrade Sonia and Pavel Syerov, on the floor, paid no attention.

V

The clerk wiped his nose with the back of his hand and wrapped a pound of butter in a newspaper. He had cut the butter from a soggy, yellow circle that stood on a wooden barrel top on the counter before him; he wiped the knife on his apron that had once been white. His pale eyes watered; his lips were a concavity on a crumpled face; his long chin hovered uncom-

fortably over a counter too high for the wizened skeleton under his old blue sweater. He sniffled and, showing two broken, blackened teeth, grinned at the pretty customer in the blue hat trimmed with cherries:

"Best butter in town, citizen, very best butter in town."

On the counter stood a pyramid of square bread loaves, dusty black and grayish white. Above the counter hung a fringe of salami, bagles and dried mushrooms. Flies hovered at the greasy brass bowls of old weighing scales and crawled up the dusty panes of a single, narrow window. Over the window, smeared by the first rain of September, hung a sign:

LEV KOVALENSKY. FOOD PRODUCTS

The customer threw some silver coins on the counter and took her package. She was turning to go when she stopped involuntarily, for a brief, startled moment, looking at the young man who had entered. She did not know that he was the owner of the store; but she knew that she could not have many occasions to see that kind of young man on the streets of Petrograd. Leo wore a new, foreign overcoat with a belt laced tightly across his trim, slender waistline; he wore a gray foreign felt hat, one side of its brim turned up over an arrogant profile with a cigarette held in the corner of his mouth by two long, straight fingers in a tight, glistening, foreign leather glove. He moved with the swift, confident, unconscious grace of a body that seemed born for these clothes, like the body of an animal for its regal fur, like the body of a foreign fashion plate.

The girl looked straight at him, softly, defiantly. He answered with a glance that was an invitation, and a mocking insult, and almost a promise. Then he turned and walked to the counter, as she went out slowly.

The clerk bowed low, so that his chin touched the circle of butter: "Good day, Lev Sergeievitch, good day, sir."

Leo flicked the ashes off his cigarette into an empty can on the counter and asked: "Any cash in the register?"

"Yes, sir, can't complain, business was good today, sir, and . . ."

"Let me have it."

The man's gnarled hand fingered his chin uncertainly; he muttered: "But, sir, Karp Karpovitch said last time you . . ."

"I said let me have it."

"Yes, sir."

Leo stuffed the bills carelessly into his wallet. He asked, lowering his voice: "Did that shipment arrive last night?"

The clerk nodded, blinking confidentially, with an intimate little giggle.

"Shut up," said Leo. "And be careful."

"Why, yes, sir, yes indeed, sir, you know I'm the soul of discretion, as they say in society, if I may say so, sir. Karp Karpovitch knows that he can trust a loyal old servant who has worked for him for . . ."

"You could use some flypaper here once in a while."

"Yes, sir, I . . ."

"I won't be in again today. Keep the store open till the usual hour."

"Yes, sir. Good day, sir."

Leo walked out without answering.

On the corner, the girl in the blue hat trimmed with cherries was waiting for him. She smiled hopefully, uncertainly. He hesitated for a second; then he smiled and turned away; his smile spread a flush of red on the cheeks and nose under the blue brim. But she stood, watching him jump into a cab and drive away.

He drove to the Alexandrovsky market. He walked swiftly past the old wares spread on the sidewalk, ignoring the eager, pleading eyes of their owners. He stopped at a little booth displaying porcelain vases, marble clocks, bronze candlesticks, a priceless loot that had found its way from some demolished palace into the dusty twilight of the market.

"I want something for a gift," he threw at the clerk who bowed solicitously. "A wedding gift."

"Yes, indeed," the clerk bowed. "Ah . . . for your bride, sir?"

"Certainly not. For a friend."

He looked indifferently, contemptuously at the delicate, cracked dusty treasures that should have reposed on velvet cushions in a museum showcase.

"I want something better," he ordered.

"Yes, indeed, sir," the clerk bowed, "something beautiful for a beloved friend."

"No. For someone I hate." He pointed at a vase of blue and gold porcelain in a corner. "What's that?"

"Ah, sir, that!" The clerk reached timidly for the vase and brought it slowly, cautiously to the counter; its price had made him hesitate to show it even to a customer in a foreign coat. "Genuine Sèvres, sir," he whispered, brushing

out of the vase, upturning it to show the delicate mark on the bottom. "A royal object, sir," he breathed, "a truly royal object."

"I'll take it," said Leo.

The clerk swallowed and fumbled at his tie, watching the wallet in the gloved fingers of a customer who had not even asked the price.

*

"Comrades, in these days of peaceful State Construction, the workers of Proletarian culture are the shock battalion in the vanguard of the Revolution. The education of the Worker-Peasant masses is the great problem of our Red week-days. We, excursion leaders, are a part of the great peace-time army of educators, imbued with the practical methodology of historical materialism, attuned to the spirit of Soviet reality, dedicated to . . ."

Kira sat in the ninth row, on a chair that threatened to fold under her at any moment. The meeting of excursion guides was coming to an end. Around her, heads drooped wearily and eyes looked furtively, hopefully at a large clock on the wall, the speaker's head. But Kira tried to listen; she held her fixed on the speaker's mouth to catch every word; she wished the words were louder. But the words could not drown out the voices ringing in her mind: a voice over the telephone, pleading, trying not to sound pleading: "Kira, why do I see you so seldom?"; an imperious voice in the darkness of her room at night: "What are those visits of yours, Kira? You said you were at Irina's yesterday. But you weren't." How long could she keep it up? She had not seen Andrei for three weeks.

The chairs around her clattered; the meeting was over. She hurried down the stairway. She was saying to a fellow guide: ". . . yes, a splendid speech. Of course, our cultural duty to the proletariat is our primary goal . . ." It was easy to say. It was easy, after she had looked straight at Leo and laughed: "Leo, why those foolish questions? Don't you trust me?" pressing her hand to her breast to hide the mark of Andrei's teeth.

She hurried home. In Marisha's room, two trunks and a wicker basket stood in the middle of the floor; empty drawers gaped open; posters were torn off the walls and piled on the trunks. Marisha was not at home.

In Kira's room, a maid hurried from the hissing Primus by the window to take her coat.

"Leo hasn't returned yet, has he?" Kira asked.

"No, ma'am."

Kira's coat was old, with rubbed patches on the elbows. Her dress had grease stains on the collar and threads hanging out of its frayed hem. With one swift movement, Kira pulled it off over her head and threw it to the maid, shaking her dishevelled hair. Then she fell on the bed, kicking off her old shoes with run-down heels, tearing off her darned, cotton stockings. The maid knelt by the bed, pulling thin silk stockings up Kira's slender legs, slipping delicate, high-heeled pumps on her feet; then she rose to help her into a trim dark woollen dress. The maid put the old coat and shoes into a wardrobe that contained four new coats and six pairs of new shoes.

But Kira had to keep her job for the protection of the title of Soviet employee; and she had to wear her old clothes to protect her job.

An extravagant bouquet of white lilies, Leo's latest gift, stood on the table. The white petals had caught a few specks of soot from the Primus. Kira had a maid, but no kitchen. The maid came for five hours every day and cooked their meals on the Primus by the window.

Leo came home, carrying the Sèvres vase wrapped in newspapers.

"Isn't dinner ready yet?" he asked. "How many times have I told you that I hate to have that thing smoking when I come home?"

"It's ready, sir." The maid hurried to turn off the Primus, her young, round face obedient and frightened.

"Have you bought the present?" Kira asked.

"There it is. Don't unwrap it. It's fragile. Let's have dinner. We'll be late."

After dinner, the maid washed the dishes and left. Kira sat at her mirror, carefully outlining her lips with a real French lipstick.

"You're not wearing that dress, are you?" Leo asked.

"Why, yes."

"No, you're not. Put on the black velvet one."

"But I don't feel like dressing up. Not for Victor's wedding. I wouldn't go at all, if it weren't for Uncle Vasil."

"Well, since we're going, I want you to look your best."

"But, Leo, is it wise? He's going to have many of his Party friends there. Why show them that we have money?"

"Why not? Certainly, we have money. Let them see that we have money. I'm not going to act like trash for the benefit of trash."

"All right, Leo. As you wish."

He looked at her appraisingly when she stood before him, severe as a nun, graceful as a Marquise of two centuries past, her hands very white and thin on the soft black velvet. He smiled with approval and took her hand, as if she were a lady at a Court reception, and kissed her palm, as if she were a courtesan.

"Leo, what did you buy for them?" she asked.

"Oh, just a vase. You may see it, if you wish."

She unwrapped the newspapers and gasped. "Leo! But this . . . this cost a fortune!"

"Certainly. It's Sèvres."

"Leo, we can't give it to them. We can't let them see that we can afford it. Really, it's dangerous."

"Oh, nonsense."

"Leo, you're playing with fire. Why bring such a present for all the Communists to see?"

"That's exactly why."

"But they know that a regular private trader couldn't afford like this."

"Oh, stop being foolish!"

"Take that thing back and exchange it."

"I won't."

"Then I'm not going to the party."

"Kira . . ."

"Leo, please!"

"Oh, very well!"

He seized the vase and flung it to the floor. It burst into glittering splinters. She gasped. He laughed: "Well, come on. You can buy them something else on our way there."

She stood looking at the splinters. She said dully: "Leo, all that money . . ."

"Will you ever forget that word? Can't we live without thinking of it all the time?"

"But you promised to save. We'll need it. Things may not last as they are."

"Oh, nonsense! We have plenty of time to start saving."

"But don't you know what they mean, all those hundreds, there, on the floor? Don't you remember it's your life that you're gambling for every one of those rubles?"

"Certainly, I remember. That's just what I do remember. How do I know I have a future? Why save? I may never need it. I've trembled over money long enough. Can't I throw it away if I want to—while I can?"

"All right, Leo. Come on. We'll be late."

"Come on. Stop frowning. You look too lovely to frown."

*

In the Dunaev dining room, a bunch of asters stood in a bowl on the table, and a bunch of daisies on the buffet, and a bunch of nasturtiums on an upright piano. The piano had been borrowed from the tenants; long streaks remained on the parquet, following its trail from the door.

Victor wore a modest dark suit and a modest expression of youthful happiness. He shook hands and smiled and bowed graciously, acknowledging congratulations. Marisha wore a purple woolen dress, and a white rose on her shoulder. She looked bewildered; she watched Victor's movements with a timid, incredulous pride; she blushed and nodded hastily to the compliments of guests, and shook hands without knowing whose hands they were, her eyes vague, roving, searching for Victor.

The guests shuffled in, and muttered best wishes, and settled down uncomfortably. The friends of the family were strained, suspicious and cautiously, elaborately polite to the Party members. The Party members were awkward, uncertain and helplessly polite to the friends of Victor's bourgeois past. The guests did not sound quite natural in their loud assurances of happiness, when they looked at the silent, stooped figure of Vasili Ivanovitch with a quiet, anguished question frozen in his eyes; at Irina in her best patched dress, with her jerky movements and her strident voice of unnatural gaiety.

Little Acia wore a pink bow on a stiff strand of hair, that kept slipping toward her nose. She giggled, once in a while, glancing up at a guest, biting her knuckles. She stared at Marisha with insolent curiosity. She snooped around the table that displayed the wedding gifts, an odd assortment of objects: a bronze clock, a China ashtray in the shape of a skull, a new Primus, a complete set of Lenin's works in red paper covers. Irina watched her closely, to drag her away in time from the buffet and the dishes of pastry.

Galina Petrovna followed Victor persistently, patting him on the shoulder, repeating: "I'm so happy, so happy, my dear boy!" The muscles of Victor's face were fixed in a wide grin, over his sparkling white teeth; he did not have to smile; he merely turned his head to her and nodded without a change of expression.

When Victor escaped from her, Galina Petrovna

Vasili Ivanovitch's shoulder, repeating: "I'm so happy, so happy, Vasili. You have a son to be proud of." Vasili Ivanovitch nodded as if he had not heard.

When Kira entered, the first person she saw, standing alone by a window, was Andrei.

She stopped short at the door. His eyes met hers and moved slowly to the man who held her arm. Leo smiled faintly, contemptuously.

Kira walked straight to Andrei; she looked graceful, erect, supremely confident, in her regal black gown; she extended her hand, saying aloud: "Good evening, Andrei. I'm so glad to see you."

His eyes told her silently that he understood, that he would be cautious, while he shook her hand with a friendly, impersonal smile.

Leo approached them slowly, indifferently. He bowed to Andrei and asked, his voice courteous, his smile insolent: "So you're a friend of Victor's, too?"

"As yourself," Andrei answered.

Kira walked on, without hurry, to congratulate Victor and Marisha. She nodded to acquaintances, and smiled, and talked to Irina. She knew that the eyes of the man by the window were following her; she did not turn to look at him.

She had talked to many guests before she approached Andrei again, as if by chance; Leo was busy listening to Lydia at the other end of the room.

Andrei whispered eagerly: "Victor has always been inviting me. This is the first time that I've accepted. I knew you'd be here. Kira, it has been three weeks . . ."

"I know. I'm sorry, Andrei. But I couldn't. I'll explain later. I'm glad to see you—if you're careful."

"I'll be careful. What a lovely dress, Kira. New?"

"Oh . . . yes. It's a present from mother."

"Kira, do you always go to parties with him?"

"Do you mean Leo?"

"Yes."

"I hope you don't presume to dictate the friends with whom I may . . ."

"Kira!" He was startled by the icy firmness of her voice; he was apologizing: "Kira, I'm sorry. Of course I didn't mean . . . Forgive me. I know I have no right to say . . . But you see, I've always disliked him."

She smiled gaily, as if nothing had happened, and leaning

into the shadow of the window niche, pressed his fingers swiftly.

"Don't worry," she whispered and, moving away from him, turned, shaking her hair, throwing at him through the tousled locks a glance of such warm, sparkling understanding that he caught his breath, thrilled by the secret they were guarding together, among strangers, for the first time.

Vasili Ivanovitch sat alone in a corner, under a lamp, and the light of a rose satin shade made his white hair pink. He looked at the shuffling feet, at the military boots of young Communists, at the blue fog of smoke streaks that billowed halfway up to the ceiling, in soft, round waves, like a heavy, transparent mixture boiling slowly, at a gold cross on a black velvet ribbon around Lydia's throat, a bright spark piercing the fog across the room.

Kira approached and sat down beside him. He patted her hand, and said nothing, and knew that she knew. Then he said, as if she had followed his unspoken thoughts: ". . . I wouldn't mind so much if he loved her. But he doesn't. . . . Kira, you know, when he was a little boy with such big black eyes, I used to look at my customers, those ladies that were like paintings of empresses, and I wondered which one of them was the mother of the little beauty, growing up somewhere, who, some day, would be my daughter, too. . . . Have you met Marisha's parents, Kira?"

Galina Petrovna had cornered Leo; she was saying enthusiastically: ". . . so glad you're successful, Leo. I've always said that a brilliant young man, like you, would have no trouble at all. That dress of Kira's is magnificent. I'm so happy to see what good care you take of my little girl. . . ."

Victor sat on the arm of a chair occupied by red-headed Rita Eksler. He leaned close to her, holding his cigarette to light the one at her lips. Rita had just divorced her third husband; she narrowed her eyes under the long red bangs and whispered confidential advice. They were laughing softly.

Marisha approached timidly and took Victor's hand with a clumsy movement of coquetry. He jerked his hand away; he said impatiently: "We can't neglect our guests, Marisha. Look, Comrade Sonia is alone. Go and talk to her."

Marisha obeyed humbly. Rita's glance followed her through a jet of smoke; Rita pulled her short skirt up and crossed her long, thin legs.

"Indeed," said Comrade Sonia coldly with an accelerated authority, "I cannot say that I congratulate you upon

choice, Comrade Lavrova. A true proletarian does not marry out of her class."

"But, Comrade Sonia," Marisha protested, stupefied, "Victor is a Party member."

"I've always said that the rules of Party admission were not sufficiently strict," said Comrade Sonia.

Marisha wandered dejectedly through the crowd of guests. No one looked at her and she had nothing to say. She saw Vasili Ivanovitch alone by the buffet, lining up bottles and glasses. She approached him and smiled hesitantly. He looked at her, astonished. She said with determination, very quickly, bluntly, running her words together, blushing: "I know you don't like me, Vasili Ivanovitch. But, you see, I . . . I love him so much."

Vasili Ivanovitch looked at her, then said: "It's very nice, child," his voice expressionless.

Marisha's family sat in a dark corner, solemn, morose, uncomfortable. Her father—a stooped, gray-haired man in a worker's blouse and patched trousers—clasped long, calloused hands over his knee; his face, with a bitter slash of a mouth, leaned forward, his fierce, brilliant eyes studying the room fixedly; his eyes were dark and young on a withered face. His wife huddled timidly behind him, pallid and shapeless in a flowered calico dress, her face like a sandy shore washed by any rains into a dull, quiet gray. Marisha's young brother, lanky boy of eight, stood holding onto his mother's skirt, owing angry, suspicious glances at little Acia.

Victor joined Pavel Syerov and a group of three men in leather jackets. He threw one arm around Syerov's shoulders and the other around those of the secretary of their Party Cell; he leaned on them both, intimately, confidentially, his dark eyes smiling. Comrade Sonia, approaching, heard him whisper: ". . . yes, I'm proud of my wife's family and their revolutionary record. Her father—you know—he was exiled to Siberia, under the Czar."

Comrade Sonia remarked: "Comrade Dunaev is a very smart man."

Neither Victor nor Syerov liked the tone of her voice. Syerov protested: "Victor's one of our best workers, Sonia."

"I said Comrade Dunaev is very smart," she repeated, and added: "I wouldn't doubt his class loyalty. I'm sure he has nothing in common with patrician gentlemen such as that Citizen Kovalensky over there."

Pavel Syerov looked fixedly at Leo's tall figure bending over

Rita Eksler. He asked: "Say, Victor, that man's name—it's Lev Kovalensky, isn't it?"

"Leo Kovalensky, yes. He's a very dear friend of my cousin's. Why?"

"Oh, nothing. Nothing at all."

Leo noticed Kira and Andrei sitting side by side on a window sill. He bowed to Rita, who shrugged impatiently, and walked toward them slowly.

"Am I intruding?" he asked.

"Not at all," said Kira.

He sat down beside her. He took out his gold cigarette case and, opening it, held it out to her. She shook her head. He held it over to Andrei. Andrei took a cigarette. Leo bent forward to light it, leaning over Kira.

"Sociology being the favorite science of your Party," said Leo, "don't you find this wedding an occasion of particular interest, Comrade Taganov?"

"Why, Citizen Kovalensky?"

"As an opportunity to observe the essential immutability of human nature. A marriage for reasons of state is one of the oldest customs of mankind. It has always been advisable to marry into the ruling class."

"You must remember," said Andrei, "the social class to which the person concerned belongs."

"Oh, nonsense!" said Kira. "They're in love with each other."

"Love," said Leo, "is not part of the philosophy of Comrade Taganov's Party. Is it?"

"It is a question that has no reason to interest you," Andrei answered.

"Hasn't it?" Leo asked slowly, looking at him. "That's what I'm trying to find out."

"Is it a question that contradicts your . . . theory on the subject?" Andrei asked.

"No. I think it supports my theory. You see, my theory is that members of your Party have a tendency to place their sexual desires high above their own class." He was looking straight at Andrei, but he pointed lightly, with his cigarette, at Marisha across the room.

"If they do," Andrei answered slowly, "they're not always unsuccessful." He was looking straight at Kira, but he pointed at Victor.

"Marisha looks happy," said Kira. "Why do you resent it,

sent the arrogant presumption of friends—"Leo began, who do not know the limit of a friendship's rights," finished.

"sha," said Kira, "we're not being gallant to . . . m sorry," he said hastily. "I'm sure Citizen Kovalensky, t misunderstand me."

"don't," said Leo. Marina had lined glasses on trays and Vasili Ivanovitch had ed them. She passed them to the guests, smiling vaguely at e hands that took the glasses; her smile was resigned, in- ferent; she was silent, which was unusual for her. The trays were emptied swiftly; the guests held the glasses agerly, impatiently. Victor rose and the clatter of voice topped short in a solemn silence.

"My dear friends," Victor's voice was clear, vibrant with his warmest persuasiveness, "I have no words to describe my deep gratitude to all of you for your kindness on this great day of my life. Let us all join in a toast to a person who is very dear to my heart, not only as a relative, but as a man who symbolizes a splendid example to us, young revolutionaries starting out on our lives of service to that cause, the Proletariat. A man who has devoted his life to the cause, who had risen bravely against the tyranny of the Czar, who has sacrificed his best years in the cold wastes of a Siberian exile, fighting for the great goal of the people's freedom. And since that goal is ever paramount for all of us, since it is higher than all thoughts of personal happiness, let us drink our first toast to one of the first fighters for the triumph of the Worker-Peasant Soviets, my beloved father-in-law, Glie Ilyitch Lavrov!"

Hands applauded noisily; glasses rose, clinking; all eyes turned to the corner where the gaunt, stooped figure of Marisha's father got up slowly. Lavrov was holding his glass but he did not smile; his gnarled hand motioned for silence. He said slowly, firmly, evenly:

"Listen here, you young whelps. I spent four years in Siberia, crushed under a boot, and I asked for freedom. I still see people starved and ragged and crushed under a boot. Our boot is red. I didn't go to Siberia to fight for a crazed, drunk, bloodthirsty gang that strangles the people as never been strangled before, that knows less of freedom than any Czar ever did! Go ahead and drink all you want

till you drown the last rag of conscience in your fool brains, drink to anything you wish. But when you drink to the Soviets, don't drink to me!"

In the dead silence of the room, a man laughed suddenly, a loud, ringing, resonant laughter. It was Andrei Taganov.

Pavel Syerov jumped up and, throwing his arm around Victor's shoulders, yelled, waving his glass: "Comrades, there are traitors even in the ranks of the workers! Let's drink to those who are loyal!"

Then there was much noise, too much noise, glasses clinked, voices rose, hands slapped shoulders, everybody yelled at once. No one looked at Lavrov.

Only Vasili Ivanovitch approached him slowly and stood looking at him. Their eyes met. Vasili Ivanovitch extended his glass and said: "Let us drink to our children's happiness, even though you don't think that they will be happy, and I don't, either."

They drank.

At the other end of the room, Victor seized Marisha's wrist, dragging her aside, and whispered, his white lips at her ear: "You damn fool! Why didn't you tell me about him?"

She muttered, blinking, her eyes full of tears: "I was scared. I knew you wouldn't like it, darling. . . . Oh, darling, you shouldn't have . . ."

"Shut up!"

There were many drinks to follow. Victor had provided a good supply of bottles and Pavel Syerov helped to open them speedily. The trays of pastry were emptied. Dirty dishes were stacked on the tables. A few glasses were broken. Cigarette smoke hung as a motionless blue cloud under the ceiling.

Marisha's family had left. Galina Petrovna sat sleepily, trying to keep her head erect. Alexander Dimitrievitch snored softly, his head on the arm of his chair. Little Acia had fallen asleep on a trunk in the corridor, her face smeared with chocolate frosting. Irina sat in a corner, watching the crowd indifferently. Comrade Sonia bent under the pink lamp, reading a newspaper. Victor and Pavel Syerov were the center of a group at the buffet that clinked glasses and tried to sing revolutionary songs in muffled voices. Marisha wandered about listlessly, her nose shiny, the white rose wilted and brownish on her shoulder.

Lydia staggered to the piano and put an arm around Marisha's waist. "It's beautiful," said Lydia in a thick, sad voice, "it's beautiful."

"What's beautiful?" Marisha asked.

"Love," said Lydia. "Romance. That's it: romance. . . . Ah, love is rare in this world. They are few, the chosen few. . . . We wander through a barren existence without romance. There are no beautiful feelings left in the world. Has it ever occurred to you that there are no beautiful feelings left in the world?"

"That's too bad," said Marisha.

"It's sad," Lydia sighed. "That's what it is: sad. . . . You're a very lucky girl. . . . But it's sad. . . . Listen, I'm going to play something beautiful for you. . . . Something beautiful and sad. . . ."

She struck the keys uncertainly. She played a gypsy love song, her fingers rushing suddenly into quick, sharp trills, then lingering on long, sad chords, then slipping on the wrong notes, her head nodding.

Andrei whispered to Kira: "Let's go, Kira. Let me take you home."

"I can't, Andrei. I . . ."

"I know. You came with him. But I don't think he's in a condition to take you home."

He pointed at Leo across the room. Leo's head, thrown back, was leaning heavily against an armchair. His one arm encircled Rita's waist; the other was thrown across the shoulders of a pretty blonde who giggled softly at something he was muttering. Rita's head rested on his shoulder and her hand caressed his dishevelled hair.

Kira rose silently, leaving Andrei, and walked to Leo. She stood before him and said softly: "Leo, we had better go home."

He waved sleepily. "Leave me alone. Get out of here."

She noticed suddenly that Andrei stood behind her. He said: "You'd better be careful of what you say, Kovalensky."

Leo pushed Rita aside and the blonde slid, giggling, to the floor. He said, frowning, pointing at Kira: "And you'd better keep away from her. And you'd better stop sending her gifts and watches and such. I resent it."

"What right have you to resent it?"

Leo stood up, swaying, smiling ominously: "What right? I'll tell you what right. I'll . . ."

"Leo," Kira interrupted firmly, weighing her every word, her voice loud, her eyes holding his, "people are looking at you. Now what is it you wanted to say?"

"Nothing," said Leo.

"If you weren't drunk . . ." Andrei began.

"If I weren't drunk, you'd what? You seem sober. And yet not sober enough not to be making a fool of yourself over a woman you have no right to approach."

"Well, listen to me, you . . ."

"You'd better listen, Leo," Kira interrupted again. "Andrei finds this the proper time to tell you something."

"What is it, Comrade G.P.U.?"

"Nothing," said Andrei.

"Then you'd better leave her alone."

"Not while you seem to forget the respect that you owe to . . ."

"Are you defending *her* against *me*?" Leo burst out laughing. Leo's laughter could be more insulting than his smile, more insulting than a slap in the face.

"Come on, Kira," said Andrei, "I'll take you home."

"Yes," said Kira.

"You're not taking her anywhere!" Leo roared. "You're . . ."

"Yes, he is!" Irina interrupted, stepping suddenly between them. Leo stared at her, amazed. With sudden strength, she whirled him about, pushing him into a window niche, while she nodded to Andrei, ordering him to hurry. He took Kira's arm and led her out; she followed silently, obediently.

Irina hissed into Leo's face: "Are you insane? What were you trying to do? Yell for all of them to hear that she's your mistress?"

Leo shrugged and laughed indifferently: "All right. Let her go with anyone she pleases. If she thinks I'm jealous, she's mistaken."

Kira sat silently in the cab, her head thrown back, her eyes closed.

"Kira," Andrei whispered, "that man is no friend of yours. You shouldn't be seen with him."

She did not answer.

When they were driving by the palace garden, he asked: "Kira, are you too tired to . . . stop at my house?"

She said indifferently: "No. I'm not. Let's stop."

*

When she came home, Leo was sprawled on the bed, dressed, asleep. He raised his head and looked at her.

"Where have you been, Kira?" he asked softly.

"Just . . . just driving around," she said.

"I thought you had gone. Forever. . . . What was it I said, tonight, Kira?"

"Nothing," she whispered, kneeling by his side.

"You should leave me, Kira. . . . I wish you could leave me. . . . But you won't. . . . You won't leave me, Kira. . . . Kira . . . will you?"

"No," she whispered. "Leo, will you leave that business of yours?"

"No. It's too late. But before . . . before they get me . . . I still have you, Kira . . . Kira . . . Kira . . . I love you . . . I still have you. . . ."

She whispered: "Yes," pressing his face, white as marble, to the black velvet of her dress.

VI

"Comrades! The Union of Socialist Soviet Republics is surrounded by a hostile ring of enemies who watch and plot for its downfall. But no external enemy, no heinous plot of world imperialists is as dangerous to us as the internal enemy of dissension within our own ranks."

Tall windows checkered into small square panes were closed against the gray void of an autumn sky. Columns of pale golden marble rose spreading into dim vaults. Five portraits of Lenin, somber as ikons, looked down upon a motionless crowd of leather jackets and red kerchiefs. A tall lectern, like the high, thin stem of a torch, stood at the head of the hall; above the lectern, like the flame of the torch spurting high to the ceiling, hung a banner of scarlet velvet with gold letters: "The All-Union Communist Party is the leader of the world fight for Freedom!" The hall had been a palace; it looked like a temple; those in it looked like an army, stern, silent and tense, receiving its orders. It was a Party meeting.

A speaker stood at the lectern. He had a little black beard, and wore a pince-nez that sparkled in the twilight; he waved long arms with very small hands. Nothing moved in the hall before him, but drops of rain rolling slowly down the window panes.

"Comrades! A grave new danger has been growing among

us in this last year. I call it the danger of over-idealism. We've all heard the accusations of its deluded victims. They cry that Communism has failed, that we've surrendered our principles, that since the introduction of NEP—our New Economic Policy—the Communist Party has been retreating, fleeing before a new form of private profiteering which now rules our country. They claim that we are holding power for the sake of power and have forgotten our ideals. Such is the whining of weaklings and cowards who cannot face practical reality. It is true that we've had to abandon the policy of Military Communism, which had brought us to the brink of total starvation. It is true that we've had to make concessions to private traders. What of it? A retreat is not a defeat. A temporary compromise is not a surrender. We were betrayed by the spineless, weak-kneed, anemic socialists of foreign countries who sold out their working masses to their bourgeois masters. The World Revolution, which was to make a pure world Communism possible, has been delayed. We, therefore, have had to compromise, for the time being. We have had to abandon our theories of pure Communism and come down to earth, to the prosaic task of economic reconstruction. Some may think it a slow, drab, uninspiring process; but loyal Communists know the epic grandeur of our new economic front. Loyal Communists know the revolutionary value and significance of our ration cards, our Primuses, the lines at our co-operatives. Our great leader, Comrade Lenin, with his usual farsightedness, warned us several years ago against the danger of being 'over-idealistic.' That perilous fallacy has smitten some of our best heads. It has taken from us the man who had been one of our first leaders—Leon Trotzky. None of his past services to the Proletariat could redeem the treachery of his assertion that we've betrayed Communism. His followers have been thrown out of our ranks. That is why we've had Party purges. That is why these purges will continue. We must follow, with absolute discipline, the program dictated by our Party—and not the petty doubts and personal opinions of the few who still think of themselves and of their so-called conscience in terms of bourgeois individualism. We don't need those who take a selfish, old-fashioned pride in the purity of their own convictions. We need those who are not afraid of a little compromise. We don't need the obstinate, unbending Communist of iron. The new Communist is of rubber! Idealism, comrades, is a good thing in its proper amount. Too much of it is like too much of a good old wine: one's liable to lose one's head. Let

this be a warning to any of Trotzky's secret sympathizers who might still remain within the Party: no past services, no past record will save them from the axe of the next Party purge. They are traitors and they will be kicked out, no matter who they are or what they've been!"

Hands applauded clamorously. Then the still, black rows of jackets broke into motion; men rose; the meeting was closed.

They gathered in groups, whispering excitedly. They giggled, muffling the sound with a hand pressed to a mouth. They pointed furtively at a few solitary figures. Behind the huge checkered windows, the lead of the sky was turning to a dark blue steel.

"Congratulations, pal," someone slapped Pavel Syerov's shoulder. "I heard you've been elected vice-president of the Railroad Workers Union's Club of Leninism."

"Yes," Syerov answered modestly.

"Good luck, Pavlusha. You're an example of activity for all of us to follow. No worries about Party purges for you."

"I've always striven to keep my Party loyalty above suspicion," Syerov answered modestly.

"Say, pal, you see, it's still two weeks till the first of the month and I've . . . well . . . I'm slightly in need of cash . . . and . . . well . . . I thought maybe. . . ."

"Sure," said Syerov, opening his wallet, "with pleasure."

"You never turn a friend down, Pavlusha. And you always seem to have enough to . . ."

"Just being economical with my salary," Syerov said modestly.

Comrade Sonia was waving her short arms, trying to plough her way through an eager group that followed her persistently. She was snapping at them: "I'm sorry, comrade, that's out of the question. . . . Yes, comrade, I'll be glad to give you an appointment. Call my secretary at the Zhenotdel. . . . You will find it wise to follow my suggestion, comrade. . . . I'd be happy to address your Circle, comrade, but unfortunately, I'm giving a lecture at a Rabfac Club at that hour. . . ."

Victor had taken the bearded speaker of the meeting aside and was whispering eagerly, persuasively: "I received my diploma at the Institute two weeks ago, comrade. . . . You understand that the job I'm holding at present is quite unsatisfactory for a full-fledged engineer and . . ."

"I know, Comrade Dunaev, I know the position you desire. Personally, I know of no better man to fill it. And I'd do

anything in my power for the husband of my friend Marisha Lavrova. But . . .” He looked around cautiously, over the rim of his pince-nez, and drew closer to Victor, lowering his voice. “Just between you and me, comrade, there’s a grave obstacle in your way. You understand that that hydroelectric project is the most stupendous undertaking of the republic at present, and every job connected with it is assigned with particular caution and . . .” his voice dropped to a whisper, “your Party record is magnificent, Comrade Dunaev, but you know how it is, there are always those inclined to suspicion, and . . . Frankly, I’ve heard it said that your social past . . . your father and family, you know . . . But don’t give up hope. I’ll do all I can for you.”

Andrei Taganov stood alone in an emptying row of chairs. He was buttoning his leather jacket slowly. His eyes were fixed on the flaming scarlet banner above the lectern.

At the top of the stairs, on his way out, he was stopped by Comrade Sonia.

“Well, Comrade Taganov,” she asked loudly, so that others turned to look at them, “what did you think of the speech?”

“It was explicit,” Andrei answered slowly, all the syllables of his voice alike, as grains of lead.

“Don’t you agree with the speaker?”

“I prefer not to discuss it.”

“Oh, you don’t have to,” she smiled pleasantly. “You don’t have to. I know—we know—what you think. But what I’d like you to answer is this: why do you think you are entitled to your own thoughts? Against those of the majority of your Collective? Or is the majority’s will sufficient for you, Comrade Taganov? Or is Comrade Taganov becoming an individualist?”

“I’m very sorry, Comrade Sonia, but I’m in a hurry.”

“It’s all right with me, Comrade Taganov. I have nothing more to say. Just a little advice, from a friend: remember that the speech has made it plain what awaits those who think themselves smarter than the Party.”

Andrei walked slowly down the stairs. It was dark. Far below, a bluish gleam showed a floor of polished marble. A street lamp beyond the tall window threw a blue square of light, checkered into panes, on the wall by the staircase; little shadows of raindrops rolled slowly down the wall. Andrei walked down, his body slender, erect, unhurried, steady, the kind of body that in centuries past had worn the Roman, the mail of a crusader; it wore a leather

Its tall, black shadow moved slowly across the blue square of light and raindrops on the wall.

*

Victor came home. He flung his coat on a chair in the lobby and kicked his galoshes into a corner. The galoshes upset an umbrella stand that clattered down to the floor. Victor did not stop to pick it up.

In the dining room, Marisha sat before a pile of opened volumes, bending her head to one side, writing studiously, biting her pencil. Vasili Ivanovitch sat by a window, carving a wooden box. Acia sat on the floor, mixing sawdust, potato peelings and sunflower-seed shells in a broken bowl.

"Dinner ready?" snapped Victor.

Marisha fluttered up to throw her arms around him. "Not . . . not quite, darling," she apologized. "Irina's been busy and I have this thesis to write for tomorrow and . . ."

He threw her arms off impatiently and walked out, slamming the door. He went down a dim corridor to Irina's room. He threw the door open without knocking. Irina stood by the window, in Sasha's arms, his lips on hers. She jerked away from him; she cried: "Victor!", her voice choked with indignation. Victor wheeled about without a word and slammed the door behind him.

He returned to the dining room. He roared at Marisha: "Why the hell isn't the bed made in our room? The room's like a pigsty. What have you been doing all day?"

"But darling," she faltered, "I . . . I've been at the Rabfac, and then at the Lenin's Library meeting, and the Wall Newspaper's Editorial Board, and then there's this thesis on Electrification I have to read tomorrow at the Club, and I don't know a thing about Electrification and I've had to read so much and . . ."

"Well, go and see if you can heat something on the Primus. I expect to be fed when I come home."

"Yes, dear."

She gathered her books swiftly, nervously. She hurried, pressing the heavy pile to her breast, dropped two books by the door, bent awkwardly to pick them up, and went out.

"Father," said Victor, "why don't you get a job?"

Vasili Ivanovitch raised his head slowly and looked at him. "What's the matter, Victor?" he asked.

"Nothing. Nothing at all. Only it's rather foolish to be regis-

tered as an unemployed bourgeois and be constantly under suspicion."

"Victor, we haven't discussed our political views for a long time, you know. But if you want to hear it—I will not work for your government so long as I live."

"But surely, Father, you're not hoping still that . . ."

"What I'm hoping is not to be discussed with a Party man. And if you're tired of the expense . . ."

"Oh, no, Father, of course it isn't that."

Sasha passed through the dining room on his way out. He shook hands with Vasili Ivanovitch. He patted Acia's head. He went out without a word or a glance at Victor.

"Irina, I want to speak to you," said Victor.

"What is it?" she asked.

"I want to speak to you—alone."

"Anything you have to say, father may hear it."

"Very well. It's about that man," he pointed at the door that had closed behind Sasha.

"Yes?"

"I hope you realize the infernal situation."

"No. I don't. What situation?"

"Do you know with what type of man you're carrying on an affair?"

"I'm not carrying on any affair. Sasha and I are engaged."

Victor jerked forward, opening his mouth and closing it again, then said slowly, with an effort to control himself: "Irina, that's utterly impossible."

She stood before him, her eyes steady, menacing, scornful. She asked: "Is it? Just exactly why?"

He learned toward her, his mouth twitching. "Listen," he hissed; "don't make any useless denials. I know what your Sasha Chernov is. He's up to his neck in counter-revolutionary plots. It's none of my business. I'm keeping my mouth shut. But it won't be long before others in the Party discover it. You know the end for bright lads like him. Do you expect me to stand by and watch my sister marrying a counter-revolutionary? What do you think it will do to my Party standing?"

"What it will do to your Party standing or to yourself," Irina said with meticulous precision, "concerns me less than the cat's leavings on the back stairs."

"Irina!" Vasili Ivanovitch gasped. Victor whirled upon him.

"You tell her!" Victor roared. "It's hard enough to get anywhere with the millstone of this family tied around my neck!"

You can roll straight down to hell, if you all enjoy it so nobly, but I'll be damned if you're going to drag me along!"

"But, Victor," Vasili Ivanovitch said quietly, "there's nothing either you or I can do about it. Your sister loves him. She has a right to her own happiness. God knows, she's had little enough of it these last few years."

"If you're so afraid for your damn Party hide," said Irina, "I'll get out of here. I'm making enough for myself. I could starve on my own on what one of your Red clubs considers a living salary! I'd have gone long ago, if it weren't for father and Acial!"

"Irina," Vasili Ivanovitch moaned, "you won't do that!"

"In other words," Victor asked, "you refuse to give up that young fool?"

"And also," Irina answered, "I refuse to discuss him with you."

"Very well," said Victor, "I've warned you."

"Victor!" Vasili Ivanovitch cried. "You're—you're not going to harm Sasha, are you?"

"Don't worry," Irina hissed, "he won't. It would be too compromising for his Party standing!"

*

Kira met Vava Milovskaia in the street, but could hardly recognize her, and it was Vava who approached timidly, muttering: "How are you, Kira?"

Vava wore an old felt hat made over from her father's derby, with a broken brim that looked as if it had not been brushed for days. One black curl hung carelessly over her right cheek, her mouth was smeared unevenly with a faded, purplish lipstick, and her little nose was shiny, but her eyes were dull; her eyes looked swollen, aged, indifferent.

"Vava, I haven't seen you for such a long time. How are you?"

"I'm . . . I'm married, Kira."

"You . . . Why, congratulations. . . . When?"

"Thanks. Two weeks ago." Vava's eyes were looking away; she muttered, staring at the street: "I . . . we . . . we didn't have a big wedding, so we didn't invite anyone. Just the family. You see, it was a church wedding, and Kolya didn't want that known at the office where he works."

"Kolya . . . ?"

"Yes, Kolya Smiatkin, you probably don't remember him, you met him at my party, though. . . . That's what I am

now: Citizen Smiatkina. . . . He works at the Tobacco Trust, and it's not a very big job, but they say he'll get a raise. . . . He's a very nice boy . . . he . . . he loves me very much. . . . Why shouldn't I have married him?"

"I didn't say you shouldn't have, Vava."

"What is there to wait for? What can one do with oneself these days, if one isn't . . . if one isn't a . . . What I like about you, Kira, is that you're the first person who didn't say she wished me to be happy!"

"But I do wish it, Vava."

"Well, I'm happy!" She tossed her head defiantly. "I'm perfectly happy!"

Vava's hand in a soiled glove rested on Kira's arm; she hesitated, as if she feared Kira's presence, and closed her fingers tighter over Kira's arm, as if she were afraid to let her go, as if she were hanging on desperately to something she did not want to utter. Then she whispered, looking away: "Kira . . . do you think . . . he's happy?"

"Victor is not a person who cares about being happy," Kira answered slowly.

"I wouldn't mind . . ." Vava whispered, "I wouldn't mind . . . if she were pretty. . . . But I saw her. . . . Oh, well, anyway, it doesn't concern me at all. Not in the least. . . . I'd like you to come over and visit us, Kira, you and Leo. Only . . . only we haven't found a place to live yet. I moved into Kolya's room, because . . . because my old room . . . well, father didn't approve, you see, so I thought it would be better to move out. And Kolya's room—it's a former storage closet in a big apartment, and it's so small that we . . . But when we find a room, I'll invite you to come over and . . . Well, I have to run along. . . . Good-bye, Kira."

"Good-bye, Vava."

*

"He's not in," said the gray-haired woman.

"I'll wait," said Comrade Sonia.

The woman shuffled uncomfortably from foot to foot and chewed her lips. Then she said: "Don't see how you can wait, citizen. We've got no reception room. I'm only Citizen Syerov's neighbor and my quarters . . ."

"I'll wait in Citizen Syerov's room."

"But, citizen . . ."

"I said I'll wait in Citizen Syerov's room."

Comrade Sonia walked resolutely down th

old neighbor followed, nodding dejectedly, watching the swift heels of Comrade Sonia's flat, masculine shoes.

Pavel Syerov jumped up when Comrade Sonia entered. He threw his arms wide in a gesture of surprise and welcome.

"Sonia, my dear!" he laughed very loudly. "It's you! My dear, I'm so sorry. I was busy and I had given orders . . . but had I known . . ."

"It's quite all right," Comrade Sonia dismissed the subject. She threw a heavy brief case on the table and unbuttoned her coat, unwinding a thick, masculine scarf from her neck. She glanced at her wristwatch. "I have half an hour to spare," she said. "I'm on my way to the Club. We're opening a Lenin's Nook today. I had to see you about something important."

Syerov offered her a chair and pulled on his coat, adjusting his tie before a mirror, smoothing his hair, smiling ingratiatingly.

"Pavel," said Comrade Sonia, "we've going to have a baby." Syerov's hands dropped. His mouth fell open. "A . . . ?"

"A baby," Comrade Sonia said firmly.

"What the . . ."

"It's been three months, I know," said Comrade Sonia.

"Why didn't you tell me sooner?"

"I wasn't sure."

"But hell! You'll have to . . ."

"It's too late to do anything now."

"Why the devil didn't you . . ."

"I said it was too late."

Syerov fell on a chair before her and stared intently unruffled calm. "Are you sure it's mine?" he asked her.

"Pavel," she said without raising her voice, "you're me."

He jumped up, and walked to the door, and came back, sat down again, and jumped up. "Well, what is it to do about it?"

"We're going to be married, Pavel."

He bent toward her, his closed fist on the table. "You're gone crazy," he said heavily.

She looked at him, silently, waiting.

"You're crazy, I tell you! I have no such intention."

"But you'll have to do it."

"I will, will I? You get out of here, you scoundrel!"

"Pavel," she said softly, "don't say that. I regret."

"Listen . . . what the . . . we're not"

country. Hell! There's no such thing as a betrayed virgin . . . and you were no virgin anyway . . . and. . . Well, if you want to go to court—try and collect for its support—and the devil take you—but there's no law to make me marry you! Marry! Hell! You'd think we lived in England or something!"

"Sit down, Pavel," said Comrade Sonia, adjusting a button on her cuff, "and don't misunderstand me. My attitude on the subject is not old-fashioned in the least. I am not concerned over morals or public disgrace or any such nonsense. It is merely a matter of our duty."

"Our . . . what?"

"Our duty, Pavel. To a future citizen of our republic."

Syerov laughed; it sounded as if he were blowing his nose. "Cut that out!" he said. "You're not addressing a Club meeting."

"Indeed," said Comrade Sonia, "so loyalty to our principles is not part of your private life?"

He jumped up again. "Now, Sonia, don't misunderstand me. Of course, I am always loyal and our principles . . . of course, it is a fine sentiment and I appreciate it . . . but then, what's the difference to the . . . future citizen?"

"The future of our republic is in the coming generation. The upbringing of our youth is a vital problem. Our child shall have the advantage of a Party mother—and father—to guide its steps."

"Hell, Sonia! That's not at all up to date. There are day-nurseries and, you know, collective training, one big family, the spirit of the collective learned early in life, and . . ."

"State nurseries are to be the great accomplishment of the future. At present—they are imperfect. Our child shall be brought up as a perfect citizen of our great republic. Our child . . ."

"Our child! Oh, hell! how do I know . . ."

"Pavel, are you intimating that . . ."

"Oh, no, no, I didn't mean anything, but . . . Hell! Sonia, I was drunk. You should have known better than . . ."

"Then you regret it, Pavel?"

"Oh, no, no, of course not. You know I love you, Sonia. . . . Sonia, listen, honest, I can't get married right now. Really, I'd like nothing better and I'd be proud to marry you, but look here, I'm just starting, I've got a career to think about. I've just made such a fine beginning, and . . . and it's my duty to the Party to train and perfect myself and rise . . ."

"I could help you, Pavel, or . . ." She said it slowly, looking at him. She did not have to finish; he understood.

"But, Sonia . . ." he moaned helplessly.

"I'm as upset about it as you are," she said calmly. "It was a more painful surprise to me than it is to you. But I'm prepared to do what I consider my duty."

He fell heavily on his chair and said dully, without raising his head: "Listen, Sonia, give me two days, will you? To think it over and get sort of used to the idea and . . ."

"Certainly," she answered, rising, "think it over. My time's up anyway. Have to run. So long."

"So long," he muttered, without looking at her.

Pavel Syerov got drunk, that evening. On the following day, he called at the Railroad Workers Union's Club. The president said: "Congratulations, Comrade Syerov. I hear you're going to marry Comrade Sonia. You couldn't make a better match." At the Party Cell, the secretary said: "Well, Pavlusha, all set to go far in this world? With such a wife . . ." At the Marxist Club, an imposing official, whom he had never met before, smiled, slapping his shoulder: "Come and see me any time, Comrade Syerov. I'm always in to a friend of your future wife."

That evening, Pavel Syerov called Antonina Pavlovna and swore at Morozov and requested a larger share than he had been getting, and demanded it in advance—and, receiving it, bought drinks for a girl he met on the street.

Three days later, Pavel Syerov and Comrade Sonia were married. They stood before a clerk in the bare room of the Zags and signed a large register. Comrade Sonia signified her intention of retaining her maiden name.

That evening, Comrade Sonia moved into Syerov's room, which was larger than her own. "Oh, darling," she said, "we must think of a good revolutionary name for our child."

*

A hand knocked on Andrei's door, a weighty knock followed by a thud, as if a fist had leaned heavily against the panel.

Andrei sat on the floor, studying, with a lamp by his side, with the huge white sheets of drafts spread before him. He raised his head and asked impatiently: "Who's there?"

"It's me, Andrei," a man's voice answered heavily. "Open the door. It's me, Stepan Timoshenko."

Andrei jumped up and threw the door open. Stepan Timoshenko, who had served in the Baltic Fleet and in the Coast Guard of the G.P.U., stood on the stair-landing, sway-

ing a little, leaning against the wall. He wore a sailor's cap, but its band bore no star, no ship's name; he wore civilian clothes, a short jacket with a mangy rabbit fur collar, with rubbed spots on the elbows of sleeves too tight for his huge arms; the fur collar was unfastened; his tanned neck with bulging cords was open to the cold. He grinned, the light glistening on his white teeth, in his dark eyes.

"Good evening, Andrei. Mind if I butt in?"

"Come in. I'm glad to see you. I thought you had forgotten your old friends."

"No," said Timoshenko. "No, I haven't." He lumbered in, and closed the door behind him, reeling a little. "No, I haven't. . . . But some of the old friends are only too damn glad to forget me. . . . I don't mean you, Andrei. No. Not you."

"Sit down," said Andrei. "Take that coat off. Aren't you cold?"

"Who, me? No. I'm never cold. And if I was, it would do me no good because this here is all I've got. . . . I'll take the damn thing off. . . . Here. . . . Sure, all right, I'll sit down. I bet you want me to sit down because you think I'm drunk."

"No," said Andrei, "but . . ."

"Well, I am drunk. But not very much. You don't mind if I'm a little drunk, do you?"

"Where have you been, Stepan? I haven't seen you for months."

"Oh, around. I was kicked out of the G.P.U., you know that, don't you?"

Andrei nodded slowly, looking down at his drafts on the floor.

"Yep," said Timoshenko, stretching his feet out comfortably, "I was kicked out. Not reliable. No. Not reliable. Not revolutionary enough. Stepan Timoshenko of the Red Balt-fleet."

"I'm sorry," said Andrei.

"Shut up. Who's asking you for sympathy? That's funny, that's what it is. . . . Very, very humorous. . . ." He looked up at the cupids on the cornice. "And you've got a funny place here. It's a hell of a place for a Communist to live in."

"I don't mind," said Andrei. "I could move, but rooms are so hard to get these days."

"Sure," said Timoshenko and laughed suddenly, loudly, senselessly. "Sure. It's hard for Andrei Taganov. It wouldn't be hard for little Comrade Syerov, for instance. It wouldn't be hard for any bastard that uses a Party card as a butcher knife

It wouldn't be hard to throw some poor devil out on the ice of the Neva."

"You're talking nonsense, Stepan. Would you . . . would you like something to eat?"

"No. Hell, no. . . . What are you driving at, you little fool? Think I'm starving?"

"Why, no, I didn't even . . ."

"Well, don't. I still have enough to eat. And to drink. Plenty to drink. . . . I just came around because I thought little Andrei needed someone to look after him. Little Andrei needs it badly. He will need it very badly."

"What are you talking about?"

"Nothing. Nothing, pal. Just talking. Can't I talk? Are you like the rest of them? Want everybody to talk, order them to talk, talk, talk, without the right to say anything?"

"Here," said Andrei, "put that pillow under your neck and take it easy. Rest. You're not feeling well."

"Who, me?" Timoshenko took the pillow and flung it at the wall and laughed. "I've never felt better in my life. I feel grand. Free and finished. No worries. No worries of any kind any more."

"Stepan, why don't you come here more often? We used to be friends. We could still help each other."

Timoshenko leaned forward, and stared at Andrei, and grinned somberly: "I can't help you, kid. I could help you only if you could take me by the scruff of my neck and kick me out and with me kick out everything that goes with me, and then go and bow very low and lick a very big boot. But you won't do it. And that's why I hate you, Andrei. And that's why I wish you were my son. Only I'll never have a son. My sons are strewn all over the whorehouses of the U.S.S.R."

He looked down at the white drafts on the floor, and kicked a book, and asked: "What are you doing here, Andrei?"

"I was studying. I haven't had much time to study. I've been busy at the G.P.U."

"Studying, eh? How many years you got left at the Institute?"

"Three years."

"Uh-huh. Think you'll need it?"

"Need what?"

"The learning."

"Why wouldn't I?"

"Say, pal, did I tell you they kicked me out of the G.P.U.?"

Oh, yes, I told you. But they haven't kicked me out of the Party. Not yet. But they will. At the next purge—I go."

"I wouldn't think of that in advance. You can still . . ."

"I know what I'm talking about. And you do, too. And do you know who'll go next?"

"No," said Andrei.

"You," said Stepan Timoshenko.

Andrei rose, crossed his arms, looked at Timoshenko, and said quietly: "Maybe."

"Listen, pal," Timoshenko asked, "have you got something to drink here?"

"No," said Andrei. "And you're drinking too much, Stepan."

"Oh, am I?" Timoshenko chuckled, and his head rocked slowly, mechanically, so that its huge shadow on the wall swung like a pendulum. "Am I drinking too much? And have I no reason to drink? Say, I'll tell you," he rose, swaying, towering over Andrei, his shadow hitting the doves on the ceiling. "I'll tell you the reason and then you'll say I don't drink enough, you poor little pup in the rain, that's what you'll say!"

He pulled at his sweater, too tight under the arms, and scratched his shoulder blades, and roared suddenly: "Once upon a time, we made a revolution. We said we were tired of hunger, of sweat and of lice. So we cut throats, and broke skulls, and poured blood, our blood, their blood, to wash a clean road for freedom. Now look around you. Look around you, Comrade Taganov, Party member since 1915! Do you see where men live, men, our brothers? Do you see what they eat? Have you ever seen a woman falling on the street, vomiting blood on the cobblestones, dying of hunger? I have. Did you see the limousines speeding at night? Did you see who's in them? There's a nice little comrade we have in the Party. A smart young man with a brilliant future. Pavel Syerov's the name. Have you ever seen him open his wallet to pay for a whore's champagne? Did you ever wonder where he gets the money? Did you ever go to the European roof garden? Not often, I bet. But if you had, you'd see the respectable Citizen Morozov getting indigestion on caviar. Who is he? Just assistant manager of the Food Trust. The State Food Trust of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics. We're the leaders of the world proletariat and we'll bring freedom to all suffering humanity! Look at our Party. Look at the loyal members with ink still wet on their Party tickets. Watch them reaping the harvest from the soil that our blood had fertilized. But we're not red enough for them. We're not revolutionaries. We're kicked out

as traitors. We're kicked out for Trotzkyism. We're kicked out because we didn't lose our sight and our conscience when the Czar lost his throne, the sight and the conscience that made him lose it. We're kicked out because we yelled to them that they've lost the battle, strangled the revolution, sold out the people, and there's nothing left now but power, brute power. They don't want us. Not me nor you. There's no place for men like you, Andrei, not anywhere on this earth. Well, you don't see it. And I'm glad you don't. Only I hope I'm not there on the day when you will!"

Andrei stood, silent, his arms crossed. Timoshenko seized his jacket and pulled it on hastily, reeling.

"Where are you going?" asked Andrei.

"Going. Anywhere. I don't want to stay here."

"Stepan, don't you think that I see it, too? But screaming about it won't help. And drinking yourself to death won't help. One can still fight."

"Sure. Go on fighting. It's none of my business. I'm going to have a drink."

Andrei watched him buttoning the jacket, pulling the starless sailor cap over one ear. "Stepan, what are you going to do?"

"Now?"

"No. In the years to come."

"The years to come?" Timoshenko laughed, throwing his head back, the mangy rabbit collar shaking on his huge shoulders. "That's a cute sentence: the years to come. Why are you so sure they're coming?" He leaned toward Andrei, and winked slyly, mysteriously. "Did it ever occur to you, Comrade Taganov, what a peculiar thing it is that so many of our Party comrades are dying of overwork? You've read it in the papers, haven't you? Another glorious victim fallen on the path of the revolution, a life burned out in a ceaseless task. . . . You know what they are, don't you, those comrades dying of a ceaseless task? Suicides. That's what they are. Suicides. Only the papers will never say it. Funny how many of them are killing themselves these days. Wonder why."

"Stepan," Andrei took a huge, hot, clammy hand into his strong, cold ones, "you're not thinking of . . ."

"I'm not thinking of anything. Hell, no. All I want is a drink. And, anyway, if I do think, I'll come to say good-bye. I promise."

At the door, Andrei stopped him once again: "Stepan, why don't you stay here? For a while?"

Stepan Timoshenko waved with the majesty of sweeping a

mantle over his shoulders, and shook his head, reeling out to the landing of the long marble stairway:

"No. Not here. I don't want to see you, Andrei. I don't want to see that damn face of yours. Because . . . you see, I'm an old battleship, ready for the scrap heap, with all its guts rusted and rotted. But I don't mind that. And I'd give the last of these rotted guts to help the only man I know left in the world—and that's you. But I don't mind that. What I mind is that I know that could I take my guts out and give them for you—it still wouldn't save you!"

VII

Kira stood looking at a building under construction.

Jagged walls of red bricks, new and raw, checkered by a net of fresh, white cement, rose to a gray sky darkening slowly in an early twilight. High against the clouds, workers knelt on the walls, and iron hammers knocked, ringing sonorously over the street, and engines roared hoarsely, and steam whistled somewhere in a tangled forest of planks, beams, scaffoldings splattered with lime. She stood watching, her eyes wide, her lips smiling. A young man, with a tanned face and a pipe in the corner of his mouth, walked swiftly up the narrow planks in the perilous framework, and the movements of his hands were brusque, precise, implacable like the blows of a hammer. She did not know how long she had been standing there. She had forgotten all but the work before her. Then, suddenly, her world returning to her with a jolt, in a blinding second of clear, sharp perception—as if new eyes were taking a first glance at a new world and saw it as she had forgotten to see it—she wondered, astonished, why she was not there, on the scaffolding, giving orders like the man with the pipe, what reason could possibly keep her from her work, her life work, her only desire. It was one swift second, so swift that she felt it only after it was over; and after it was over, she saw the world again as she had grown accustomed to see it, and she remembered why she was not on the scaffolding, what reason had closed to her, forever, the only work she wanted. And in her mind, four words filled the void she felt rising from somewhere.

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in her breast: "Perhaps . . . Some day . . . Abroad . . ."

A hand touched her shoulder: "What are you doing here, citizen?"

A militia-man was staring suspiciously down at her. He wore a peaked khaki cap, with a red star, over a low forehead. He squinted, opening soft lips that had no shape, like pillows: "You have been standing here for half an hour, citizen. What do you want?"

"Nothing," said Kira.

"Well, then, on your way, citizen."

"I was just looking," said Kira.

"You," decreed the militia-man, opening lips shapeless as pillows, "have no business looking."

She turned silently and walked away.

Against her skin, sewn on to her shirt, a little pocket was growing thicker, slowly, week by week. She kept in it the money she managed to save from Leo's reckless spending. It was a foundation rising for their future and perhaps—some day—abroad: . . .

She was returning home from a meeting of excursion guides. There had been a political examination at the Excursion Center: A man with a close-cropped head had sat at a broad desk, and trembling, white-lipped guides had stood before him, one after the other, answering questions in jerking, unnaturally bright voices. Kira had recited adequately the appropriate sounds about the importance of historical excursions for the political education and class-consciousness of the working masses; she had been able to answer the question about the state of the latest strike of textile workers in Great Britain; she had known all about the latest decree of the Commissar of People's Education in regard to the Schools for the Illiterates of the Turkestan; but she could not name the latest amount of coal produced by the mines of the Don basin.

"Don't you read the newspapers, comrade?" the examining official had asked sternly.

"Yes, comrade."

"I would suggest that you read them more thoroughly. We do not need limited specialists and old-fashioned academicians who know nothing outside their narrow professions. Our modern educators must be politically enlightened and show an active interest in our Soviet reality, in all the details of our state construction. . . . Next!"

She might be dismissed, Kira thought indifferently, walking home. She would not worry. She could not worry any longer.

She would not allow herself to reach the state of Comrade Nesterova, an elderly guide who had been a school teacher for thirty years. Comrade Nesterova, between excursions, school classes, clubs, and cooking for a paralyzed mother, spent all her time reading the newspapers, memorizing every item word for word, preparing herself for the examination. Comrade Nesterova needed her job badly. But when she had stood before the examiner, Comrade Nesterova had not been able to utter a word; she had opened her mouth senselessly, without a sound, and collapsed suddenly, shrieking, in hysterical tears; she had had to be carried out of the room and a nurse had been called. Comrade Nesterova's name had been crossed off the list of excursion guides.

Kira had forgotten the examination by the time she reached her house: she was thinking of Leo; she was wondering how she would find him that evening. The question arose, with a small twist of anxiety, every time she came home late and knew that she would find him there. He would leave in the morning, smiling and cheerful and brisk with energy; but she never knew what to expect at the end of the day. Sometimes she found him reading a foreign book, barely answering her greeting, refusing to eat, chuckling coldly once in a while at the bright lines of a world so far from their own. Sometimes she found him drunk, staggering across the room, laughing bitterly, tearing banknotes before her eyes when she spoke of the money he had spent. Sometimes she found him discussing art with Antonina Pavlovna, yawning, talking as if he did not hear his own words. Sometimes—rarely—he smiled at her, his eyes young and clear as they had been long ago, on their first meetings, and he pressed money into her hand, whispering: "Hide it from me. . . . For the escape. For Europe. . . . We'll do it . . . some day . . . if you can keep me from thinking . . . until then. . . . If we can only keep from thinking. . . ."

She had learned to keep from thinking; she remembered only that he was Leo and that she had no life beyond the sound of his voice, the movements of his hands, the lines of his body—and that she had to stand on guard between him and the something immense, unnamable which was moving slowly toward him, which had swallowed so many. She would stand on guard; nothing else mattered; she never thought of the past; the future—no one around her thought of the future.

She never thought of Andrei; she never allowed herself to wonder what the days, perhaps the years, ahead of her

have to be. She knew that she had gone too far and could not retreat. She was wise enough to know that she could not leave him; she was brave enough not to attempt it. In averting a blow he would not be able to stand, she was paying him, silently, for what she had done. Some day, she felt dimly, she would have to end the payment; the day when, perhaps, a passage abroad would open for Leo and her; then she would end it without hesitation, since Leo would need her; then Leo would be safe; nothing else mattered.

"Kira?" a gay voice called from the bathroom, when she entered their room.

Leo came out, a towel in his hand, naked from the waist up, shaking drops of water off his face, throwing tangled hair off his forehead, smiling.

"I'm glad you're back, Kira. I hate to come home and not find you here."

He looked as if he had just stepped out of a stream on a hot summer day, and one could almost see the sun sparkling in the drops of water on his shoulders. He moved as if his whole body were a living will, straight, arrogant, commanding, a will and a body that could never bend because both had been born without the capacity to conceive of bending.

She stood still, afraid to approach him, afraid to shatter one of the rare moments when he looked what he could have been, what he was intended to be.

He approached her and his hand closed over her throat and he jerked her head back to hold her lips to his. There was a contemptuous tenderness in his movement, and a command, and hunger; he was not a lover, but a slave owner. Her arms holding him, her mouth drinking the glistening drops on his skin, she knew the answer, the motive for all her days, for all she had to bear and forget in those days, the only motive she needed.

*

Irina came to visit Kira, once in a while, on the rare evenings she could spare from her work at the Club. Irina laughed sonorously, and scattered cigarette ashes all over the room, and related the latest, most dangerous political anecdotes, and drew caricatures of all their acquaintances on the white table cloth.

But on the evenings when Leo was busy at the store, when Kira and Irina sat alone at a lighted fireplace, Irina did not always laugh. Sometimes, she sat silently for long minutes and

when she raised her head and looked at Kira, her eyes were bewildered, pleading for help. Then she whispered, looking into the fire:

"Kira, I . . . I'm afraid. . . . I don't know why, it's only at times, but I'm so afraid. . . . What's going to happen to all of us? That's what frightens me. Not the question itself, but that it's a question you can't ask anyone. You ask it and watch people, and you'll see their eyes, and you'll know that they feel the same thing, the same fear, and you can't question them about it, but if you did, they couldn't explain it, either. . . . You know, we're all trying so hard not to think at all, not to think beyond the next day, and sometimes even not beyond the next hour. . . . Do you know what I believe? I believe *they're* doing it deliberately. *They* don't want us to think. That's why we have to work as we do. And because there's still time left after we've worked all day and stood in a few lines, we have the social activities to attend, and then the newspapers. Do you know that I almost got fired from the Club, last week? I was asked about the new oil wells near Baku and I didn't know a damn thing about them. Why should I know about the oil wells near Baku if I want to earn my millet drawing rotten posters? Why do I have to memorize newspapers like poems? Sure, I need the kerosene for the Primus. But does it mean that in order to have kerosene in order to cook millet, I have to know the name of every stinking worker in every stinking well where the kerosene comes from? Two hours a day of reading news of state construction for fifteen minutes of cooking on the Primus? . . . Well, and there's nothing we can do about it. If we try, it's worse. Take Sasha, for instance . . . Oh, Kira! I'm . . . I'm so afraid! . . . He . . . he . . . Well, I don't have to lie to you. You know what he's doing. It's a secret organization of some kind and they think they can overthrow the government. Set the people free. His duty to the people, Sasha says. And you and I know that any one of that great people would be only too glad to betray them all to the G.P.U. for an extra pound of linseed oil. They have secret meetings and they print things and distribute them in the factories. Sasha says we can't expect help from abroad, it's up to us to fight for our own freedom. . . . Oh, what can I do? I would like to stop him and I have no right to stop him. But I know they'll get him. Remember the students they sent to Siberia last spring? Hundreds, thousands of them. You'll never hear from any of them again. He's an orphan, hasn't a soul in the world, but me. I would ~~frantically~~ on

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n, but he won't listen, and he's right, only I love him. I love m. And he'll go to Siberia some day. And what's the use? Ira! What's the use?"

Sasha Chernov turned the corner of his street, hurrying home. It was a dark October evening and the little hand that seized his coat belt seemed to have shot suddenly out of nowhere. Then he distinguished a shawl thrown over a little head and a pair of eyes staring up at him, huge, unblinking terrified.

"Citizen Chernov," the girl whispered, her trembling body pressed to his legs, stopping him, "don't go home."

He recognized his neighbor's daughter. He smiled and patted her head, but, instinctively, stepped aside, into the shadow of a wall. "What's the matter, Katia?"

"Mother said . . ." the girl gulped, "mother said to tell you not to come home. . . . There are strange men there. . . . They've thrown your books all over the room. . . ."

"Thank your mother for me, kid," Sasha whispered and whirled about and disappeared behind the corner. He had had time to catch sight of a black limousine standing at the door of his house.

He raised his collar and walked swiftly. He walked into a room and telephoned. A strange man's voice answered gruffly. Sasha hung up without a word; his friend had been arrested.

They had had a secret meeting, that night. They had discussed plans, agitation among the workers, a new printing press. He grinned a little at the thought of the G.P.U. agent looking at the huge pile of anti-Soviet proclamations in his room. He frowned; tomorrow the proclamations would have been distributed into countless hands in Petrograd's factories.

He jumped into a tramway and rode to another friend's house. Turning the corner, he saw a black limousine at the door. He hurried away.

He rode to a railroad terminal and telephoned again, a different number. No one answered.

He walked, shuffling through a heavy slush, to another address. He saw no light in the window of his friend's room. But he saw the janitor's wife at the back yard gate, whispering excitedly to a neighbor. He did not approach the house.

He blew at his frozen, gloveless hands. He hurried to another address. There was a light in the window for which

was looking. But on the window sill stood a vase of peculiar shape and that had been the danger signal agreed upon.

He took another tramway. It was late and the tramway was almost empty; it was lighted too brightly. A man in a military tunic entered at the next stop. Sasha got out.

He leaned against a dark lamp post and wiped his forehead. His forehead was burning with a sweat colder than the melting snow drops.

He was hurrying down a dark street when he saw a man in an old derby hat strolling casually on the other side. Sasha turned a corner, and walked two blocks, and turned again, and walked a block, and turned once more. Then he looked cautiously over his shoulder. The man in the old derby was studying the window of an apothecary shop three houses behind him.

Sasha walked faster. A gray snow fluttered over yellow lights over closed gates. The street was deserted. He heard no sound but that of his own steps crunching mud. But through the sound, and through the distant grating of wheels, and through the muffled, rumbling, rising knocks somewhere in his chest, he heard the shuffling, soft as a breath, of steps following him.

He stopped short and looked back. The man in the derby was bending to tie a shoe lace. Sasha looked up. He was at the door of a house he knew well. It took the flash of a second. He was behind the door and, pressed to a wall in a dark lobby, without movement, without breath, he watched the square of the glass pane in the door. He saw the man in the derby pass by. He heard his steps crunching away, slowing down, stopping, hesitating, coming back. The derby swam past the glass square again. The steps creaked, louder and lower, back and forth, somewhere close by.

Sasha swung noiselessly up the stairs and knocked at a door.

Irina opened it.

He pressed a finger to his lips and whispered: "Is Victor home?"

"No," she breathed.

"Is his wife?"

"She's asleep."

"May I come in? They're after me."

She pulled him in and closed the door slowly, steadily, taking a long, patient minute. The door touched the jamb without a sound.

Galina Petrovna came in with a bundle under her arm.

"Good evening, Kira. . . . My Lord, Kira, what a smell in this room!"

Kira rose indifferently, dropping a book. "Good evening, Mother. It's the Lavrovs next door. They're making sauerkraut."

"My Lord! So that's what he was mixing in the big barrel. He's certainly uncivil, that old Lavrov. He didn't even greet me. And after all, we're relatives, in a way."

Behind the door, a wooden paddle grated in a barrel of cabbage. Lavrov's wife sighed monotonously: "Heavy are our sins . . . heavy are our sins. . . ." The boy was chipping wood in a corner and the crystal chandelier tinkled, shuddering, with every blow. The Lavrovs had moved into the room vacated by their daughter; they had shared a garret with two other families in a workers' tenement; they had been glad to make the change.

Galina Petrovna asked: "Isn't Leo home?"

"No," said Kira, "I'm expecting him."

"I'm on my way to evening classes," said Galina Petrovna, "and I just dropped in for a minute . . ." She hesitated, fingered her bundle, smiled apologetically, and said too casually: "I just dropped in to show you something, see if you like it . . . maybe you'll want to . . . buy it."

"To buy it?" Kira repeated, astonished. "What is it, Mother?"

Galina Petrovna had unwrapped the bundle; she was holding an old-fashioned gown of flowing white lace; its long train touched the floor; Galina Petrovna's hesitant smile was almost shy.

"Why, Mother!" Kira gasped. "Your wedding gown!"

"You see," Galina Petrovna explained very quickly, "it's the school. I got my salary yesterday and . . . and they had deducted so much for my membership in the Proletarian Society of Chemical Defense—and I didn't even know I was a member—that I haven't . . . You see, your father needs new shoes—the cobbler's refused to mend his old ones—and I was going to buy them this month . . . but with the Chemical Defense and . . . You see, you could alter it nicely—the dress, I mean—it's good material, I've only worn it . . . once. . . . And I thought, if you liked it, for an evening gown, maybe, or . . ."

"Mother," Kira said almost severely, and wondered at the

"Where's the maid?" Leo asked.

"She had to go. We waited, but you're late, Leo."

"That's all right. We had dinner at a restaurant, Tonia and I. You haven't changed your mind, have you, Kira? Will you go with us to that opening?"

"I'm sorry, Leo, I can't. I have a guides' meeting tonight. . . . And, Leo, are you sure you want to go? This is the third night club opening in two weeks."

"This is different," said Antonina Pavlovna. "This is a real casino, just like abroad. Just like Monte Carlo."

"Leo," Kira sighed helplessly, "gambling again?"

He laughed: "Why not? We don't have to worry if we lose a few hundreds, do we, Tonia?"

Antonina Pavlovna smiled, pointing her chin forward: "Certainly not. We just left Koko, Kira Alexandrovna." She lowered her voice confidentially. "There's another shipment of white flour coming from Syerov day after tomorrow. How that boy can handle his business! I admire him tremendously."

"I'll jump into my dinner jacket," Leo said. "It won't take me a second. Do you mind turning to the window for a moment, Tonia?"

"Certainly," Antonina Pavlovna smiled coquettishly, "I do mind. But I promise not to peek, no matter how much I'd love to."

She stood at the window, putting a friendly hand on Kira's shoulder. "Poor Koko!" Antonina Pavlovna sighed. "He works so much. He has a meeting tonight—the Food Trust's Employees' Educational Circle. He's vice-secretary. He has to keep up his social activity, you know." She winked significantly. "He has so many meetings and sessions and things. I'd positively wilt of loneliness if our dear Leo wasn't gallant enough to take me out once in a while."

Kira looked at Leo's tall black figure in his immaculate dinner clothes, as she had looked at herself in the medieval wedding gown: as if he were a being from many centuries away, and it seemed strange to see him standing by the table with the Primus.

He took Antonina Pavlovna's arm with a gesture that belonged in a foreign film scene, and they left. When the door had closed behind them in Lavrov's room, Kira heard Lavrov's wife grunting: "And they say private traders don't make no money."

"Dictatorship of the Proletariat!" Lavrov growled and spat loudly.

Kira put on her old coat. She was not going to the excursion guides' meeting. She was going to the pavilion in a lonely palace garden.

*

A fire was burning in Andrei's fireplace. The logs creaked with sharp little explosions, long hulks broken into checks of an even, transparent, luminous red, and little orange flames swayed, fluttering, meeting, curving softly, dying suddenly, leaping up again, little blue tongues licking glowing coals; over the logs, as if suspended motionless in the air, long red flames tapered into the darkness of the chimney; yellow sparks shot upward, dying against black sooted bricks. An orange glow danced, trembling, on the white brocaded walls, on the posters of Red soldiers, smokestacks and tractors. One of Leda's feet drooped over the edge of the mantelpiece, its toes pink in the glow.

Kira sat on a box before the fireplace. Andrei sat at her feet, his face was buried in her knees; his hand caressed slowly the silken arch of her foot; his fingers dropped to the floor and came back to her tight silk stocking.

"... and then, when you're here," he whispered, "it's worth all the torture, all the waiting. . . . And then I don't have to think any more. . . ."

He raised his head. He looked at her and pronounced words she had never heard from him before: "I'm so tired. . . ."

She held his head, her two hands spread on his temples. She asked: "What's the matter, Andrei?"

He turned away, to the fire. He said: "My Party." Then he whirled back to her. "You know it, Kira. Perhaps you knew it long ago. You were right. Perhaps you're right about many things, those things we've tried not to discuss."

She whispered: "Andrei, do you want to discuss it—with me? I don't want to hurt you."

"You can't hurt me. Don't you think I can see it all, myself? Don't you think I know what that great revolution of ours has come to? We shoot one speculator and a hundred others hire taxis on Nevsky every evening. We raze villages to the ground, we fire machine guns into rows of peasants crazed with misery, when they kill a Communist. And ten of the avenged victim's Party brothers drink champagne at the home of a man with diamond studs in his shirt. Where did he get the diamonds? Who's paying for the champagne? We don't look into that too closely."

"Andrei, did you ever think that it was you—your Party—who drove the men you call speculators into what they are doing—because you left them no choice?"

"I know it. . . . We were to raise men to our own level. But they don't rise, the men we're ruling, they don't grow, they're shrinking. They're shrinking to a level no human creatures ever reached before. And we're sliding slowly down into their ranks. We're crumbling, like a wall, one by one. Kira, I've never been afraid. I'm afraid, now. It's a strange feeling. I'm afraid to think. Because . . . because I think, at times, that perhaps our ideals have had no other result."

"That's true! The fault was not in men, but in the nature of your ideals. And I . . . No, Andrei, I won't speak about it. I wish I could help you. But of all people, I'm the one who can help you least. You know it."

He laughed softly: "But you are helping me, Kira. You're the only one in this whole world who's helping me."

She whispered: "Why?"

"Because, no matter what happens, I still have you. Because, no matter what human wreckage I see around me, I still have you. And—in you—I still know what a human being can be."

"Andrei," she whispered, "are you sure you know me?"

He whispered, his lips in her hand so that she heard the words as if she were gathering them, one by one, in the hollow of her palm: "Kira, the highest thing in a man is not his god. It's that in him which knows the reverence due a god. And you, Kira, are my highest reverence. . . ."

*

"It's me," a voice whispered behind the door, "Marisha. Let me in, Irina."

Irina unlocked the door, cautiously, uncertainly. Marisha stood on the threshold with a loaf of bread in her hand.

"Here," she whispered, "I brought you something to eat. Both of you."

"Marisha!" Irina screamed.

"Keep quiet!" Marisha whispered with a cautious glance down the corridor. "Sure, I know. But don't worry. My mouth's shut. Here, take this. It's my own bread ration. No one will notice. I know why you didn't eat any breakfast this morning. But you can't keep that up."

Irina seized her arm, jerked her into the room, closed the door and giggled hysterically: "I . . . You see . . . oh,

Marisha, I didn't expect it of you to . . ." Her hand hung over one eye; the other eye was full of tears.

Marisha whispered: "I know how it is, Hell! You love him. . . . Well, I don't know anything officially, so I don't have to tell anything, if they ask me? But for God's sake don't keep him here long. I'm not so sure about Victor."

"Do you think he . . . suspects?"

"I don't know. He's acting mighty queer. And if he knows—I'm afraid of him, Irina."

"It's just till tonight," Irina whispered, "he's leaving . . . tonight."

"I'll try to watch Victor for you."

"Marisha . . . I can't thank you . . . I . . ."

"Oh, hell! Nothing to cry about."

"I'm not crying . . . I . . . It's just . . . I haven't slept for two nights and . . . Marisha, you're so . . . I thank you and . . ."

"Oh, that's all right. Well, so long. I won't hang around here."

"Darling, I'm so glad!" She laughed soundlessly. "I really think I've saved you. They've arrested everyone of your group. I've pumped that out of Victor. Everyone but you."

"But if . . ."

"Oh, we're safe now. Just a few more hours to wait." She crouched on a box by his side, dropping her head on his shoulder, brushing the hair out of her feverish, sparkling eyes. "Then, when you get abroad, be sure and write to me the very first day, remember? The very first."

"Sure," he said dully.

"Then I'll manage to get out somehow. And just think of it! Abroad! We'll go to a night club and you'll look so funny in full dress clothes! Really, I think the tailors will refuse to fit you."

"Probably," he said, trying to smile.

"And then we'll see girls dancing in funny costumes, just like the ones I draw. And think! I can get a job designing fashions and costumes and stage sets. No more posters for me. Not a single poster! I won't draw another proletarian so long as I live!"

"I hope so."

"But, you know, I must warn you. I'm a very bad house-keeper. Really, I'll be impossible to live with. Your steak will be burned for dinner—oh, yes, we'll have steak every day!—and your socks won't be darned, and I won't let you complain. If you try to—I'll batter the life out of you, you poor little helpless, delicate creature!" She laughed hysterically, and buried her face on his shoulder, and bit his shirt, for her laughter was slipping into sounds that were not laughter.

He kissed her hair; he whispered bravely: "I won't complain at all if you can go ahead with your drawing. That's one more crime I'll never forgive this country. I think you could be a great artist. And listen, do you know that you've never given me a drawing, and I've asked you so often?"

"Oh, yes!" she sighed. "I've promised them to so many people, but I never concentrate long enough to finish one properly. Here's a promise, though: I'll draw two dozen pictures—there, abroad—and you can stick them all over the walls of our house. Sasha, *our house!*"

His arms closed tightly over a trembling body with a tousled head turned away from him.

*

"This mush," said Victor "is burned"

"I'm sorry," Irina muttered, "I guess I didn't watch it closely and I . . ."

"Is there anything else for lunch?"

"No, Victor, I'm sorry. There's nothing in the house and . . ."

"There's never anything in this house! Funny, how the food seems to have disappeared—these last few days."

"No more than usual," said Marisha. "And remember, I didn't get my bread ration this week."

"Well, why didn't you?"

"I was too busy to stand in line and . . ."

"Why couldn't Irina get it?"

"Victor," said Vasili Ivanovitch, "your sister is not feeling well."

"So I notice."

"I'll eat your mush, if you don't want it," said Acia, reaching for his plate.

"You've had enough, Acia," Irina protested. "You have to hurry back to school."

"Oh, hell!" said Acia.

"Acia! Where did you learn such language?"

"I don't wanna go back," Acia whined. "We've gotta decorate Lenin's Nook this afternoon. Oh, I hate gluing pictures outta magazines on their old red blotters. I got bawled out twice, 'cause I get them on crooked."

"You hurry and get your coat. You'll be late."

Acia sighed with a resigned glance at the empty lunch dishes and shuffled out.

Victor leaned back in his chair, his hands in his pockets, and looked at Irina closely. "Not going to work today, Irina?" he asked casually.

"No. I've telephoned them. I don't feel well. I think I have a temperature."

"It's better not to take the chance of going out in this awful weather," said Marisha. "Look at it snowing."

"No," said Victor, "Irina shouldn't take chances."

"I'm not afraid," said Irina, "only I think it's safer to stay in."

"No," said Victor, "you've never been afraid of anything. A commendable trait—sometimes. And sometimes—it may go too far."

"Just what do you mean?"

"You really should be more careful—of your health. Why don't you call a doctor?"

"Oh, it's not necessary. I'm not that bad. I'll be all right in a few days."

"Yes, I think so," said Victor, rising.

"Where are you going today, Victor?" Marisha asked.

"Why do you have to know?"

"Oh, nothing . . . I . . . well . . . You see, I thought if you weren't too busy, I'd like you to come over to my Club and say a few words about something. They've all heard about my prominent husband and I've promised to bring you to address them—you know, something on Electrification or modern airplanes or something."

"Sorry," said Victor, "some other time. I've got to see a man today. About a job. About that job on the dam."

"May I go with you, Victor?"

"Certainly not. What's this? Checking up on me? Jealous or something?"

"Oh, no, no, darling. No. Nothing."

"Well, then, shut up. I'm not going to have a wife tagging me around."

"Are you looking for a new job, Victor?" Vasili Ivanovitch d.

Well, what do you think? Think I'll settle down to a rational slave's drudgery for the rest of my life? Well, you'll see."

*

"Are you sure?" the official asked.

"I'm sure," said Victor.

"Who else is responsible?"

"No one. Just my sister."

"Who else lives in your apartment, Comrade Dunaev?"

"My wife, my father, and my little sister—she's just a child. My father doesn't suspect a thing. My wife is a scatter-brained creature who wouldn't notice anything right under her nose. And anyway, she's a member of the Komsomol. There are also tenants, but they never come in contact with our side of the apartment."

"I see. Thank you, Comrade Dunaev."

"I'm merely doing my duty."

The official rose and extended his hand. "Comrade Dunaev, in the name of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics, I thank you for your courage. They are still few, those whose devotion to the State rises above all personal ties of blood and family. That is an attitude of the future, toward which we are trying to educate our backward people. That is the highest

proof of loyalty a Party man can give. I shall see to it that your heroism does not remain unknown."

"I do not deserve this high praise, comrade," said Victor. "The only value of my example is in showing our Party that the family is an institution of the past, which should not be considered when judging a member's loyalty to our great Collective."

VIII

The door bell rang.

Irina shuddered and dropped her newspaper. Marisha lowered her book.

"I'll open it," said Victor, rising.

Irina looked at the dining-room clock. One hour was left before the train's departure. And Victor had not gone to the Party meeting; and he would not leave the house.

Vasili Ivanovitch was carving a paper knife, sitting by the window. Acia yelled from somewhere under the table, rustling old magazines: "Say, is this a picture of Lenin? I gotta cut out ten of them for the Nook and I can't find that many. Is this Lenin or is it a Czechoslovakian general? I'll be damned if I can . . ."

They heard the steps of many heavy boots in the lobby. The door was thrown open. A man in a leather jacket stood on the threshold, a slip of paper in his hand. Two soldiers in peaked caps stood behind him, their hands on the butts of the guns at their belts. A third one stood at the entrance door in the lobby, holding a bayonet.

They heard a scream; it came from Marisha. She jumped up, pressing both hands to her mouth. Vasili Ivanovitch rose slowly. Acia stared up from under the table, her mouth hanging open. Irina stood very straight, too straight, leaning back a little.

"Search warrant," said the man in the leather jacket, throwing the paper on the table, and motioning to his soldiers. "This way!"

They walked down the corridor to Irina's room.

They threw the closet door open. Sasha stood on the threshold, looking at them with a somber grin.

Vasili Ivanovitch gasped, in the corridor, behind the soldiers. Acia yelled: "Oh, God! That's why she wouldn't let me open" Marisha kicked her ankles. A drawing on the edge of a table slid down, rustling, fluttering to the floor.

"Which one is the Citizen Irina Dunaeva?" asked the man in the leather jacket.

"I am," said Irina.

"Listen," Sasha jerked forward. "She had nothing to do with it . . . she . . . it's not her fault. . . . I threatened her and . . ."

"With what?" the man in the leather jacket asked, his voice expressionless.

A soldier ran his hands swiftly down Sasha's clothes. "No weapons," he reported.

"All right," said the man in the leather jacket. "Take him down to the car. The Citizen Dunaeva, too. And the old man search the apartment."

"Comrade," Vasili Ivanovitch approached the leader, his voice steady, his hands shaking. "Comrade, my daughter couldn't be guilty of . . ."

"You'll have a chance to talk later," said the man and turned to Victor. "Are you a Party member?"

"Yes," said Victor.

"Your card?" Victor showed his Party card. The man pointed to Marisha: "Your wife?"

"Yes."

"All right. These two can stay. Get your coats, citizen

On the floor, melting snow trailed the soldiers' boots. A with a shade that had slipped sideways, threw a broken of light into the corridor, on Marisha's face, greenish- with sunken eyes staring at Victor.

The soldier on guard in the lobby opened the door to the Upravdom. The Upravdom's coat was thrown huddled over his shoulders, over a dirty, unbuttoned shirt. He clutching his fingers with a dry little crackle of joints: "Oh, my God! Oh, my God! Oh, my God! . . ."

rade Commissar, I knew nothing about this. Comrade missar, I swear. . . ." The soldier slammed the door.

faces of curious neighbors gathered on the stair-landing. Irina kissed Acia and Marisha. Victor approached face frozen in anxious concern: "Irina, I'm so sorry. I'll see what I can do and . . ."

Her eyes stopped him; they were looking at him fixedly; they looked suddenly like the eyes of Maria Petrovna in the old portrait. She turned and followed the soldiers, without a word. She went first; Sasha and Vasili Ivanovitch followed.

*

Vasili Ivanovitch was released in three days.

Sasha Chernov was sentenced to ten years in a Siberian prison, for counter-revolutionary activity.

Irina Dunaeva was sentenced to ten years in a Siberian prison, for assisting a counter-revolutionary.

Vasili Ivanovitch tried to see officials, got a few letters of introduction to a few assistant secretaries, spent hours huddled in the corners of unheated waiting rooms, made telephone calls, trying to keep his voice from trembling. Nothing could be done and he knew it.

When he came home, he did not speak to Victor. He did not look at Victor. He did not ask for Victor's help.

Marisha, alone, greeted Vasili Ivanovitch when he came home. She said timidly: "Here, Vasili Ivanovitch, have some dinner. I cooked the noodle soup you like—for you, specially." She blushed, grateful and embarrassed, when he answered with a silent, absent-minded smile.

Vasili Ivanovitch saw Irina in a cell of the G.P.U. He locked himself in his room for many hours and cried silently, happily, on the day when he arranged for her last request to be granted. She had asked permission to marry Sasha before they were sent away.

The wedding was performed in a bare hall of the G.P.U. Armed guards stood at the door. Vasili Ivanovitch and Kira were the witnesses. Sasha's lips twitched. Irina was very calm. She had been calm ever since her arrest. She looked a little thinner, a little paler; her skin seemed transparent; her eyes too big; her fingers were steady on Sasha's arm. She raised her face for his kiss after the ceremony, with a tender, compassionate smile.

The official whom Vasili Ivanovitch saw on the following day said: "Well, you got what you wanted. Only I don't see what good that fool rigmarole will do them. Don't you know that their prisons are three hundred and fifty kilometers apart?"

"No," said Vasili Ivanovitch and sat down heavily. "I didn't know that."

But Irina had expected it. That had been the re-

wedding; she had hoped it would influence the decision. It had not.

*

It was Vasili Ivanovitch's last crusade. No one could appeal a sentence of the G.P.U. But a prison assignment could be changed; if he could get the proper influence, the proper connections. . . . Vasili Ivanovitch rose at dawn. Marisha forced him to swallow a cup of black coffee, stopping him in the lobby on his way out, pushing the mug into his hands, trembling in her long nightgown. Night found him in a casino lobby, pushing his way through a crowd, crumpling his hat in both hands, stopping an imposing figure he had been expecting for hours, saying softly: "Comrade Commissar . . . just a few words . . . please . . . Comrade Commissar . . ." He was thrown out by an attendant in uniform, once, and lost his hat.

He made appointments and obtained interviews. He entered a solemn office, his old, patched coat brushed thoroughly, his shoes shined, his white hair parted neatly. He stood before a desk, and his tall shoulders that had carried a heavy rifle through many dark nights, through many Siberian forests, many years ago, sagged helplessly. He looked into a stern face and said:

"Comrade Commissar, that's all I ask. Just that. It's not much, is it? Just send them to the same place. I know they've been counter-revolutionaries and you have a right to punish them. I'm not complaining, Comrade Commissar. It's ten years, you know, but that's all right. Only send them to the same place. What difference does it make to you? What difference does it make to the State? They're so young. They love each other. It's ten years, but you know and I know that they'll never come back—it's Siberia, and the cold and the hunger, and the conditions . . ."

"What's that?" a stern voice interrupted him.

"Comrade Commissar, I . . . I didn't mean anything . . . No . . . I didn't mean . . . Only suppose they get sick or something? Irina is not very strong. They're not sentenced to death. And while they're alive—couldn't you let them be together? It would mean so much to them—and so little to anyone else. I'm an old man, Comrade Commissar, and she's my daughter. I know Siberia. It would help me, if I knew that she wasn't alone—there—that she had a man with her, her husband. I'm not sure I know how to ask you, Comrade Commissar, but you must forgive me. You see, I've never asked a favor

in my life. You probably think that I'm indignant and hate you all in my heart. But I don't. I won't. Just do that one thing—that last thing—send them to the same prison—and I'll bless you as long as I live."

He was refused.

*

"I heard the whole story," said Andrei, when Kira spoke to him about it. "Do you know who denounced Irina?"

"No," said Kira, and turned away, and added: "I suspect it, though. Don't tell me. I don't want to hear it."

"I won't."

"I didn't want to ask for your help, Andrei. I know I can't expect you to intercede for a counter-revolutionary, but couldn't you ask them to change her prison assignment and have them sent to the same place? It wouldn't be treason on your part, and it really makes no difference to your officials."

He held her hand and said: "Certainly. I'll try."

In an office of the G.P.U., the executive looked at Andrei coldly and asked:

"Pleading for a . . . relative, aren't you, Comrade Taganov?"

"I don't understand you, comrade," Andrei answered slowly, looking straight at him.

"Oh, yes, I think you do. And I think you should understand that keeping a mistress who is the daughter of a former factory owner, is not the best way to strengthen your Party standing. . . . Don't look startled, Comrade Taganov. You really didn't think it was unknown to us, did you? And you're working in the G.P.U.! You surprise me."

"My personal affairs . . ."

"Your *what kind* of affairs, Comrade Taganov?"

"If you're speaking of Citizen Argounova . . ."

"I *am* speaking of Citizen Argounova. And I'd suggest that you use some of the methods and authority which your position gives you, to investigate Citizen Argounova a little—for your own sake, while we're on the subject."

"I know everything I have to know about Citizen Argounova. You don't have to bring her into this. She is absolutely blameless politically."

"Oh, *politically*? And in other respects?"

"If you're speaking as my superior, I refuse to listen to anything about Citizen Argounova except her political standing."

"Very well. I don't have to say anything. I was speaking merely as a friend. You should be careful, Comrade Taganov. You don't have many friends left—in the Party."

Andrei could do nothing to change Irina's sentence.

*

"Hell!" said Leo, dipping his head into a basin of cold water, for he had come home very late the night before, "I'm going to see that skunk Syerov. He has a big boy friend in the G.P.U. He'll have to do something if I tell him to."

"I wish you'd try, Leo," said Kira.

"The damned sadists! What difference should it make to them if the poor kids rot together in their infernal prison? They know they'll never come back alive."

"Don't tell him that, Leo. Ask him nicely."

"I'll ask him *nicely*!"

In Pavel Syerov's outer office, the secretary sat typing intently, biting her lower lip. Ten visitors were waiting before the wooden railing. Leo walked straight through the office, swung the little gate open and threw at the secretary:

"I want to see Comrade Syerov. At once."

"But, citizen," the secretary gasped, "you're not allowed to . . ."

"I said I want to see him at once."

"Comrade Syerov is very busy, citizen, and there are all these citizens here waiting, and he can't see you out of turn . . ."

"You go and tell him it's Lev Kovalensky. He'll see me fast enough."

The secretary rose and backed into Syerov's office, staring at Leo, as if she expected him to draw a gun. She returned, looking more frightened, and said, gulping: "Go right in, Citizen Kovalensky."

When the door closed and they were alone, Pavel Syerov jumped up and hissed at Leo, his voice a muffled roar: "You damn fool! Are you insane? How dare you come here?"

Leo laughed, his icy laughter that was like a master's hand slapping an insolent slave's face. "You're not speaking to me, are you?" he asked. "Particularly when you're worried about caution?"

"Get out of here! I can't talk to you here!"

"You don't have to," said Leo, sitting down comfortably. "I'll do the talking."

"Do you realize whom you're talking to? You're demented or else I've never seen insolence in my life!"

"Repeat that to yourself," said Leo, "with my compliments."

"Hell!" said Syerov, dropping into his chair. "What do you want?"

"You have a friend in the G.P.U."

"I'm glad you remember that."

"I do. That's why I'm here. I have two friends sentenced to ten years in Siberia. They've just been married. They're being sent to prisons hundreds of kilometers apart. I want you to see that they're sent together, to the same place."

"Uh-huh," said Pavel Syerov. "I've heard about the case. A beautiful example of Party loyalty on the part of Comrade Victor Dunaev."

"Don't you think it's slightly ludicrous, *you* talking of Party loyalty to *me*?"

"Well, what are you going to do, if I don't lift a finger about the case?"

"You know," said Leo. "I could do a lot."

"Sure," said Syerov complaisantly. "I know you could. I also know you won't. Because, you see, to drown me, you'd have to be the stone tied around my neck, and I don't think you'll go that far in your noble unselfishness."

"Listen," said Leo, "drop the official pose. We're both crooks, and you know it, and we hate each other, and we both know it, but we're in the same boat and it's not a very steady one. Don't you think it would be wiser if we helped each other as much as we could?"

"Yes, I sure do. And your part of it is to keep as far away from here as you can. And if you weren't so damn blinded by your old patrician arrogance, which it's about time to forget, you'd know better than to ask me to intercede for any cousins of yours, which would be as good as posting on a poster my exact connection with you."

"You damn coward!"

"Well, maybe I am. And maybe it would do you good to acquire some of the same quality. You'd better not come around demanding any favors from me. You'd better remember that even if we are chained together—for the time being—I have more opportunities than you to break the chain."

Leo rose. At the door he turned and said: "As you wish. Only it would have been wiser of you—in case the chain is ever in my hands. . . ."

"Yes. And it would have been wiser of you if you hadn't come here—in case it's ever in mine. . . . And listen," he lowered his voice, "you can do something for me and you'd better do it. Tell that hog Morozov to send the money. He's late again on the last deal. I told him I'm not to be kept waiting."

*

Marisha said hesitantly, trying not to look at Victor: "Listen, don't you think that if I saw someone and asked . . . You know, just to send them to the same prison . . . it wouldn't make any difference to anyone . . . and . . ."

Victor seized her wrist and swung her around so savagely that she squealed with pain. "Listen," he said through his teeth, "you keep as far out of it as your fool legs will carry you. It would be fine for me, wouldn't it? My wife begging for counter-revolutionaries!"

"But it's only . . ."

"Listen! You breathe only one word—understand?—just one to any friend of yours—and you'll get a divorce notice the next morning!"

That night, Vasili Ivanovitch came home, looking calmer than usual. He took off his coat and folded his gloves neatly, meticulously on the mirror-stand in the lobby. He did not look at the dinner Marisha had set out for him in the dining room. He said: "Victor, I want to speak to you."

Victor followed him reluctantly to his office.

Vasili Ivanovitch did not sit down. He stood, his hands hanging limply by his sides, and looked at his son.

"Victor," said Vasili Ivanovitch, "you know what I might say. But I won't say it. I won't ask any questions. It's a strange time we're living in. Many years ago, I felt sure of what I thought. I knew when I was right and I knew when to condemn. I can't do it now. I don't know whether I can condemn anyone for anything. There's so much horror and suffering around us that I don't want to brand anyone as guilty. We're poor, bewildered creatures—all of us—who suffer so much and know so little! I can't blame you for anything you might have done. I don't know your reasons. I won't ask. I know I won't understand. No one understands each other these days. You're my son, Victor. I love you. I can't help it, as you can't help being what you are. You see, I've wanted a son ever since I was younger than you are now. I've never trusted men. And so I wanted a man of my own, at whom I could

look proudly, directly, as I'm looking at you now. When you were a little boy, Victor, you cut your finger, once, a deep cut, clear to the bone. You came in from the garden to have it bandaged. Your lips were blue, but you didn't cry. You didn't make a sound. Your mother was so angry at me because I laughed happily. But, you see, I was proud of you. I knew I would always be proud of you. . . . You know, you were so funny, when your mother made you wear a velvet suit with a big lace collar. You were so angry—and so pretty! You had curly hair . . . Well, all that doesn't matter. It's only that I can't say anything against you, Victor. I can't think anything against you. So I won't question you. I'll only ask you for one favor: you can't save your sister, I know it; but ask your friends—I know you have friends who can do it—just ask them to have her sent to the same prison with Sasha. Just that. It won't interfere with the sentence and it won't compromise you. It's one last favor to her—a death-bed favor, Victor, for you know you'll never see her again. Just do that—and the book will be closed. I'll never look back. I'll never try to read some of the pages which I don't want to see. That will settle all our accounts. I'll still go on having a son, and even if it's hard, sometimes, not to think, one can do it, these days, one has to, and you'll help me. Just one favor, in exchange for . . . in exchange for all that's past."

"Father," said Victor, "you must believe me, I'd do anything in my power, if I could. . . . I've tried, but . . ."

"Victor, we won't argue. I'm not asking whether you can do it. I know you can. Don't explain. Just say yes or no. Only, if it's no, Victor, then it's the end for you and me. Then I have no son any longer. There's a limit, Victor, to how much I can forgive."

"But, Father, it is thoroughly impossible, and . . ."

"Victor, I said if it's no, I have no son any longer. Think of how much I've lost these last few years. Now what is the answer?"

"I can do nothing."

Vasili Ivanovitch straightened his shoulders slowly, the two lines that cut his cheeks, from his nostrils to the corners of his mouth, looked set, firm, emotionless. He turned and walked to the door.

"Where are you going?" Victor asked.

"That," said Vasili Ivanovitch, "does not concern you any longer."

In the dining room, Marisha and Acia were sitting at the

table, staring at the plates of a cold dinner they had not touched.

"Acia," said Vasili Ivanovitch, "get your coat and hat."

"Father!" Marisha's chair clattered back as she leaped to her feet; it was the first time she had ever addressed that word to Vasili Ivanovitch.

"Marisha," Vasili Ivanovitch said gently, "I'll telephone you in a few days . . . when I find a place to live. Will you then send my things over . . . what's left of mine here?"

"You can't go!" said Marisha, her voice breaking. "With no job and no money and . . . This is your house."

"This is your husband's house," said Vasili Ivanovitch. "Come on, Acia."

"May I take my stamp collection along?" Acia muttered.

"Take your stamp collection along."

Marisha knelt on the window sill, her nose flattened against the glass, her back heaving in silent sobs, and watched them go. Vasili Ivanovitch's shoulders drooped and, under the street lantern, she could see the white patch of his bare neck, between the collar of his old coat and the black fur cap on his bowed head; he held Acia's hand, and her arm was stretched up to his, and she seemed very small next to his huge bulk; she shuffled obediently, heels first, through a brown slush, and clutched the big stamp album to her breast.

*

Kira saw Irina in a cell of the G.P.U. on the evening of her departure. Irina smiled calmly; her smile was soft, wondering; her eyes, in a face that looked like wax, stared at Kira gently, vaguely, as if fixed, with quiet astonishment, on something distant that she was struggling to understand.

"I'll send you mittens," said Kira, trying to smile, "woolen ones. Only I warn you, I'll knit them myself, so don't be surprised if you won't be able to wear them."

"No," said Irina, "but you can send me a snapshot. It will look nice: Kira Argounova knitting!"

"And you know," said Kira, "you've never given me that drawing you promised."

"That's right, I haven't. Father has them all. Tell him to let you select any that you want. Tell him I said so. Still, it's not what I promised you. I promised a real portrait of Leo."

"Well, we'll have to wait for that till you come back."

"Yes." Then she jerked her head and laughed. "It's nice of you, Kira, only you don't have to fool me. I'm not afraid."

But I know. Remember, when they sent those University students to Siberia? You don't hear of any of them coming back. It's the scurvy or consumption, or both. . . . Oh, it's all right. I know it."

"Irina . . ."

"Come on, we don't have to be emotional, even if it is the last time. . . . There's something I wanted to ask you, Kira. You don't have to answer, if you don't want to, it's just curiosity: what is there between you and Andrei Taganov?"

"I've been his mistress for over a year," said Kira. "You see, Leo's aunt in Berlin didn't . . ."

"It's just as I thought. Well, kid, I don't know which one of us needs more courage to face the future."

"I'll be afraid only on a day that will never come," said Kira. "The day when I give up."

"I've given up," said Irina, "and I'm not afraid. Only there's something I would like to understand. And I don't think anyone can explain it. You see, I know it's the end for me. I know it, but I can't quite believe it, I can't feel it. It's so strange. There's your life. You begin it, feeling that it's something so precious and rare, so beautiful that it's like a sacred treasure. Now it's over, and it doesn't make any difference to anyone, and it isn't that they are indifferent, it's just that they don't know, they don't know what it means, that treasure of mine, and there's something about it that they should understand. I don't understand it myself, but there's something that should be understood by all of us. Only what is it, Kira? What?"

*

Political convicts traveled in a separate car; men with bayonets stood at its doors. Irina and Sasha sat facing each other on hard wooden benches; they had traveled together part of the way, but they were approaching a junction where Irina was to be transferred to another train. The car windows were black and lustrous, as if sheets of dusty patent leather had been pasted behind the glass panes; only the fluffy, wet stars of snow, smashing against the glass, showed that there was an earth beyond the panes, and wind, and a black sky. A lantern trembled high under the ceiling, as if every knock of the wheels under the floor kicked the yellow flame out, and it fluttered and came back again, shivering, clutching the little stub of candle. A boy in an old green student's cap, alone by a window, sang softly, monotonously, through his teeth, and

his voice sounded as if he were grinning, although his cheeks were motionless:

*"Hey, little apple
Where are you rolling?"*

Sasha held Irina's hands. She was smiling, her chin buried in an old woolen scarf. Her hands were cold. A white vapor fluttered at her lips as she whispered: "We must not think of it as ten years. It sounds so long, doesn't it? But it really isn't. You know, some philosopher said that time is only an illusion or something like that. Who was it that said it? Well, it doesn't matter. Time can pass very quickly, if one stops thinking of it. We'll still be young, when we'll . . . when we'll be free. So let's promise each other not to think of anything else. Now, promise?"

"Yes," he whispered, looking at her hands. "Irina, if only I hadn't . . ."

"And that's something you've already promised me never to mention again, not even to yourself. Darling, don't you see that it's really easier for me—this way—than to have remained at home, with you sent here alone? This way, I'll feel that we have something in common, that we're sharing something. Aren't we?"

He buried his face in her hands and said nothing.

"And listen," she whispered, bending down to his blond hair, "I know it won't always be easy to remain cheerful. Sometimes one thinks: oh, what's the use of remaining brave just for one's pride's sake? So let's agree on this: we'll both be brave for each other. When you feel the worst, just smile—and think that you're doing something for me. And I'll do the same. That will keep us together. And you know, it's very important to remain cheerful. We'll last longer."

"What for?" he asked. "We won't last long enough anyway."

"Sasha, what nonsense!" She pulled his head up by a strand of hair, looking straight into his eyes, as if she believed her every word. "Two strong, healthy creatures like us! And, anyway, I'm sure those stories are exaggerated—if you mean the hunger and the consumption. Nothing is ever as bad as it's painted."

The wheels grated under the floor, slowing down.

"Oh, God!" Sasha moaned. "Is that the station?"

The car jerked forward and the wheels went on knocking under the floor, like a mallet striking faster and faster.

"No," Irina whispered breathlessly, "not yet."

The student by the window wailed, as if he were grinning, to the rhythm of the wheels:

*"Hey, little apple,
Where are you rolling?"*

And he repeated, slowly, biting into every word, as if the words were an answer to a question, and the question itself, and a deadly certainty of some silent thought of his own: "Hey . . . little . . . apple . . . where . . . are . . . you . . . rolling?"

Irina was whispering: "Listen, here's something we can do: we can look at the moon, sometimes—and, you know, it's the same moon everywhere—and we would be looking at the same thing together that way, you see?"

"Yes," said Sasha, "it will be nice."

"I was going to say the sun, but I don't suppose there will be much sun there, so . . ." A cough interrupted her; she coughed dully, shaking, pressing her hand to her mouth.

"Irina!" he cried. "What's that?"

"Nothing," she smiled, blinking, catching her-breath. "Just a little cold I caught. Those G.P.U. cells weren't heated too well."

A lantern swam past the window. Then there was nothing but the silent snowflakes splattering against the glass, but they sat, frozen, staring at the window.

Irina whispered: "I think we're approaching."

Sasha sat up, erect, his face the color of brass, darker than his hair, and said, his voice changed, firm: "If they let us write to each other, Irina, will you . . . every day?"

"Of course," she answered gaily.

"Will you . . . draw things in your letters, too?"

"With pleasure. . . . Here," she picked a small splinter of coal from the window ledge, "here, I'll draw something for you, right now."

With a few strokes, swift and sure as a surgeon's scalpel, she sketched a face on the back of her seat, an imp's face that grinned at them with a wide, crescent mouth, with eyebrows flung up, with one eye winking mischievously, a silly, infectious, irresistible grin that one could not face without grinning in answer.

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Here," said Irina, "he'll keep you company after . . . after station. . . ."

Sasha smiled, answering the imp's smile. And suddenly, bowing his head back, clenching his fists, he cried, so that the student by the window shuddered and looked at him: "Why do they talk of honor, and ideals, and duty to one's country? Why do they teach us . . ."

"Darling, not so loud! Don't think useless thoughts. There are so many useless thoughts in the world!"

At the station, another train was waiting on a parallel track. Guards with bayonets escorted some of the prisoners out. Sasha held Irina, and her bones creaked in his huge arms, and he kissed her lips, her chin, her hair, her neck, and he made a sound that was not quite a moan and not quite a beast's growl. He whispered hoarsely, furiously, into her scarf, blushing, choking, words he had always been reluctant to utter: "I . . . I . . . I love you. . . ."

A guard touched her elbow; she tore herself away from Sasha and followed the guard down the aisle. At the door, Sasha pushed the guard aside, savagely, insanely, and seized Irina again, and held her, not kissing her, looking at her stupidly, his long hands crushing the body of the wife he had never possessed.

The guard tore her away from him and pushed her out through the door. She leaned back for a second, for a last look at Sasha. She grinned at him, the homely, silly grin of her imp, her nose wrinkled, one eye winking mischievously. Then the door closed.

The two trains started moving at once. Pressed tightly to the glass pane, Sasha could see the black outline of Irina's head in the yellow square of a window in the car on the next track. The two trains rolled together, iron mallets striking faster and faster under the floor, the glow of the station swimming slow back over the dark floor of the car that Sasha was watching. Then the grayish patch of snow between them grew wider. He could still touch the other train with his outstretched arm if the window were open, he thought; then he could still touch it then he could reach it no longer, even were he to leap. He tore his eyes from that other window and watched the white stretch that was growing between them, his finger the glass, as if he wanted to seize that white stretch and it, and pull with his whole strength, and stop it. The trains were flying farther and farther apart. At the level of his

he could now see the bluish, steely gleams of wheels whirling down narrow bands in the snow. Then he did not look at the snow any longer. His glance clung to the tiny yellow square with a black dot that was a human figure, far away. And as the yellow square shrank swiftly, his eyes would not let it go, and he felt his glance being pulled, stretched, with a pain as excruciating as a wrenched nerve. Across an endless waste of snow, two long caterpillars crawled apart; two thin, silvery threads preceded each; the threads led, disappearing, into a black void. Sasha lost sight of the window; but he could still see a string of yellow spots that still looked square, and above them something black moving against the sky, that looked like car roofs. Then there was only a string of yellow beads, dropping into a black well. Then, there was only the dusty glass pane with patent leather pasted behind it, and he was not sure whether he still saw a string of sparks somewhere or whether it was something burned into his unblinking, dilated eyes.

Then there was only the imp left, on the back of the empty seat before him, grinning with a wide, crescent mouth, one eye winking.

IX

Comrade Victor Dunaev, one of our youngest and most brilliant engineers, has been assigned to a job on the Volkhovstroy, the great hydroelectric project of the Soviet Union. It is a responsible post, never held previously by one of his years.

The clipping from *Pravda* lay in Victor's glistening new brief case, along with a similar one from the *Krasnaya Gazeta*, and, folded carefully between them, a clipping from the Moscow *Izvestia*, even though it was only one line about "Comrade V. Dunaev."

Victor carried the brief case when he left for the construction site on Lake Volkhov, a few hours ride from Petrograd. A delegation from his Party Club came to see him off at the station. He made a short, effective speech about the future of proletarian construction from the platform of the car, and

forgot to kiss Marisha when the train started moving. The speech was reproduced in the Club's Wall Newspaper on the following day.

Marisha had to remain in Petrograd; she had her course at the Rabfac to finish and her social activities; she had suggested timidly that she would be willing to give them up and accompany Victor; but he had insisted on her remaining in the city. "My dear, we must not forget," he had told her, "that our social duties come first, above all personal considerations."

He had promised to come home whenever he was back in the city. She saw him once, unexpectedly, at a Party meeting. He explained hurriedly that he could not come home with her, for he had to take the midnight train back to the construction site. She said nothing, even though she knew that there was no midnight train.

She had developed a tendency to be too silent. At the Kom-somol meetings, she made her reports in a strident, indifferent voice. When caught off guard, she sat staring vacantly ahead, her eyes puzzled.

She was left alone in the big, empty rooms of the Dunaev apartment. Victor had talked intimately to a few influential officials, and no tenants had been ordered to occupy their vacant rooms. But the silence of the apartment frightened Marisha, so she spent her evenings with her family, in her old room, next to Kira's.

When Marisha appeared, her mother sighed and muttered some complaint about the rations at the co-operative, and bent silently over her mending. Her father said: "Good evening," and gave no further sign of noticing her presence. Her little brother said: "You here again?" She had nothing to say. She sat in a corner behind the grand piano, reading a book until late at night; then she said: "Guess I'll be going," and went home.

One evening, she saw Kira crossing the room hurriedly on her way out. Marisha leaped to her feet, smiling eagerly, hopefully, although she did not know why, nor what she hoped for, nor whether she had anything to say to Kira. She made a timid step forward and stopped: Kira had not noticed her and had gone out. Marisha sat down slowly, still smiling vacantly.

*

Snow had come early. It grew by Petrograd's sidewalks in craggy mountain ranges, veined with thin, black threads of

soot, spotted with brown clods and cigarette stubs and greenish, fading rags of newspapers. But under the walls of the houses, snow grew slowly, undisturbed, soft, white, billowing, pure as cotton, rising to the top panes of basement windows.

Above the streets, window sills hung as white, overloaded shelves. Cornices sparkled, trimmed with the glass lace of long icicles. Into an icy, summer-blue sky little billows of pink smoke rose slowly, melting like petals of apple blossoms.

High on the roofs, snow gathered into menacing white walls behind iron railings. Men in heavy mittens swung shovels high over the city and hurled huge, frozen white clods, as rocks, down to the pavements below; they crashed with a dull thud and a thin white cloud. Sleighs whirled sharply to avoid them; hungry sparrows, their feathers fluffed, scattered from under the muffled, thumping hoofs.

On street corners, huge cauldrons stood encased in boxes of unpainted boards. Men with shovels swung the snow up into the cauldrons, and narrow streams of dirty water gurgled from under the furnaces, running by the curb, long black threads cutting white streets.

At night, the furnaces blazed open in the darkness, little purplish-orange fires low over the ground, and ragged men slipped out of the night, bending to extend frozen hands into the red glow.

Kira walked soundlessly through the palace garden. A narrow track of footprints, half-buried under a fresh white powder, led through the deep snow to the pavilion; Andrei's footprints, she knew; few visitors ever crossed that garden. Tree trunks stood bare, black and dead like telegraph poles. The palace windows were dark; but, far at the end of the garden, showing through the stiff, naked branches, a bright yellow square hung in the darkness and a little patch of snow was golden-pink under Andrei's window.

She rose slowly up the long marble stairway. There was no light; her foot searched uncertainly for every frozen, slippery step. It was colder than in the street outside, the dead, damp, still cold of a mausoleum. Hesitantly, her hand followed the broken marble rail. She could see nothing ahead; it seemed as if the steps would never end.

When she came to a break in the railing, she stopped. She called helplessly, with a little note of laughter in her frightened voice: "Andrei!"

A wedge of light split the darkness above as he

open. "Oh, Kira!" He rushed down to her, laughing apologetically: "I'm so sorry! It's those broken electric wires."

He swung her up into his arms and carried her to his room, while she laughed: "I'm sorry, Andrei, I'm getting to be such a helpless coward!"

He carried her to the blazing fireplace. He took off her coat and hat, his fingers wet with snow melting on her fur collar. He made her sit down by the fire, removed her mittens and rubbed her cold fingers between his strong palms; he unfastened her new felt overshoes, and took them off, shaking snow that sizzled on the bright red coals.

Then he turned silently, took a long, narrow box, dropped it in her lap and stood watching her, smiling. She asked: "What is this, Andrei?"

"Something from abroad."

She tore the paper and opened the box. Her mouth fell open without a sound. The box held a nightgown of black chiffon, so transparent that she saw the flames of the fireplace dancing through its thin black folds, as she held it high in frightened, incredulous fingers. "Andrei . . . where did you get that?"

"From a smuggler."

"Andrei! *You*—buying from a smuggler?"

"Why not?"

"From an . . . illegal speculator?"

"Oh, why not? I wanted it. I knew you'd want it."

"But there was a time when . . ."

"There was. Not now." Her fingers wrinkled the black chiffon as if they were empty. "Well?" he asked. "Don't you like it?"

"Oh, Andrei!" she moaned. "Andrei! Do they wear things like that abroad?"

"Evidently."

"Black underwear? How—oh, how silly and how lovely!"

"That's what they do abroad. They're not afraid of doing silly things that are lovely. They consider it reason enough to do things because they're lovely."

She laughed: "Andrei, they'd throw you out of the Party if they heard you say that."

"Kira, would you like to go abroad?"

The black nightgown fell to the floor. He smiled calmly, bending to pick it up: "I'm sorry. Did I frighten you, Kira?"

"What . . . what did you say?"

"Listen!" He was kneeling suddenly by her side, his arms around her, his eyes intent with a reckless eagerness she had

never seen in them before. "It's an idea I've had for some time . . . at first, I thought it was insane, but it keeps coming back to me. . . . Kira, we could . . . You understand? Abroad . . . forever. . . ."

"But, Andrei . . ."

"It can be done. I could still manage to be sent there, get an assignment, some secret mission for the G.P.U. I'd get you a passport to go as my secretary. Once across the border—we'd drop the assignment, and our Red passports, and our names. We'd run away so far they'd never find us."

"Andrei, do you know what you're saying?"

"Yes. Only I don't know what I'd do there. I don't know—yet. I don't dare to think about it, when I'm alone. But I can think of it, I can talk of it when you're here with me. I want to escape before I see too much of what I see around us. To break with all of it at once. It would be like starting again, from the beginning, from a total void. But I'd have you. The rest doesn't matter. I'd grow to understand what I'm just beginning to learn from you now."

"Andrei," she stammered, "you, who were the best your Party had to offer the world . . ."

"Well, say it. Say I'm a traitor. Maybe I am. And maybe I've just stopped being one. Maybe I've been a traitor—all these years—to something greater than what the Party ever offered the world. I don't know. I don't care. I feel as if I were naked, naked and empty and clear. Because, you see, I feel certain of nothing in that involved mess they call existence, of nothing but you." He noticed the look in her eyes and asked softly: "What's the matter, Kira? Have I said anything to frighten you?"

She whispered without looking at him: "No, Andrei."

"It's only what I said once—about my highest reverence—remember?"

"Yes . . ."

"Kira, will you marry me?"

Her hands fell limply. She looked at him, silently, her eyes wide and pleading.

"Kira, dearest, don't you see what we're doing? Why do we have to hide and lie? Why do I have to live in this agony of counting hours, days, weeks between our meetings. Why have I no right to call you in those hours when I think I'll go insane if I don't see you? Why do I have to keep silent? Why can't I tell them all, tell men like Leo Kovalensky, that you're mine, that you're my . . . my wife?"

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She did not look frightened any longer; the name he had pronounced had given her courage, her greatest, coldest battlefield courage. She said: "Andrei, I can't."

"Why?"

"Would you do something for me, if I asked you very urgently?"

"Anything."

"Don't ask me why."

"All right."

"And I can't go abroad. But if you want to go alone . . .

"Let's forget it, Kira. I won't ask any questions. But as for my going alone—don't you think you shouldn't say that?"

She laughed, jumping up: "Yes, let's forget it. Let's have our own bit of Europe right here. I'm going to try your gift on. Turn around and don't look."

He obeyed. When he turned again, she was standing at the fireplace, her arms crossed behind her head, fire flickering behind the black silhouette of her body, through a thin, black mist.

He was bending her backward, so that the locks of her hair, tumbling down, looked red in the glow of the fire; he was whispering: "Kira . . . I wasn't complaining tonight . . . I'm happy . . . happy that I have nothing left but you. . . ."

She moaned: "Andrei, don't say it! Please, please, don't say it!"

He did not say it again. But his eyes, his arms, the body he felt against her body, cried to her without sound: "I have nothing left but you . . . nothing . . . but you. . . ."

*

She came home long after midnight. Her room was dark and empty. She sat wearily down on the bed, to wait for Leo. She fell asleep, exhausted, her hair spilled over the foot of the bed, her body huddled in her crumpled red dress.

The telephone awakened her; it was ringing fiercely, insistently. She jumped up. It was daylight. The lamp was still burning on the table; she was alone.

She staggered to the telephone, her eyes closing heavily, her eyelids leaden. "Allo?" she muttered, leaning against the wall, her eyes closed.

"Is that you, Kira Alexandrovna?" an unctuous masculine voice asked, drawing vowels meticulously, with an anxious inflection.

"It's Karp Morozov speaking, Kira Alexandrovna. Kira Alexandrovna, soul of mine, can you come over and take that . . . that Lev Sergeievitch home? Really, he shouldn't be seen at my house so often. It seems there was a party and . . ."

"I'll be right over," said Kira, her eyes open wide, dropping the receiver.

She dressed hurriedly. She could not fasten her coat; her fingers would not slip the buttons through the buttonholes: her fingers were trembling.

It was Morozov who opened the door when she arrived. He was in his shirtsleeves, and a vest was fastened too tightly, pulled in taut little wrinkles, across his broad stomach. He bowed low, like a peasant: "Ah, Kira Alexandrovna, soul of mine, how are we today? Sorry I had to trouble you, but . . . Come right in, come right in."

The wide, white-paneled lobby smelled of lilac and moth balls. Behind a half-open door, she heard Leo laughing, a gay, ringing, carefree laughter.

She walked straight into the dining room, without waiting for Morozov's invitation. In the dining room, a table was set for three. Antonina Pavlovna held a teacup, her little finger crooked delicately over its handle; she wore an Oriental kimono; powder was caked in white patches on her nose; lipstick was smeared in a blot between her nose and chin; her eyes seemed very small without make-up, puffed and weary. Leo sat at the table in his black trousers and dress shirt, his collar thrown open, his tie loose, his hair disheveled. He was laughing sonorously, trying to balance an egg on the edge of a knife.

He raised his head and looked at Kira, astonished. His face was fresh, young, radiant as on an early spring morning, a face that nothing, it seemed, could mar or alter. "Kira! What are you doing here?"

"Kira Alexandrovna just happened to . . ." Morozov began timidly, but Kira interrupted bluntly:

"He called me."

"Why, you . . ." Leo whirled on Morozov, his face turned into a vicious snarl; then he shook his head and laughed again, as swiftly and suddenly: "Oh, hell, that's a good one! So they all think that I have a wet-nurse to watch me!"

"Lev Sergeievitch, soul of mine, I didn't mean to . . ."

"Shut up!" Leo ordered and turned to Kira. "Well, since you're here, take your coat off and sit down and have some breakfast. Tonia, see if you have another couple of . . ."

"We're going home, Leo," Kira said quietly. He looked at her and shrugged: "If you insist . . ." and rose wily.

Morozov picked up his unfinished cup of tea; he poured it into his saucer and held the saucer on the tips of his fingers and drank, sucking loudly. He said, looking at Kira, then at Leo, hesitantly, over the edge of the saucer: "I . . . you see . . . it was like this: I called Kira Alexandrovna because I was afraid that you . . . you weren't well, Lev Sergeievitch and you . . ."

" . . . were drunk," Leo finished for him. "Oh, no, but . . ."

"I was. Yesterday. But not this morning. You had no business . . ."

"It was just a little party, Kira Alexandrovna," Antonina Pavlovna interrupted soothingly. "I suppose we did stay a little too late, and . . ."

"It was five o'clock when you crawled into bed," Morozov growled. "I know, because you bumped into my bed and upset the water pitcher."

"Well, Leo brought me home," Antonina Pavlovna continued, ignoring him, "and I presume he must have been a little tired. . . ."

"A little . . ." Morozov began.

" . . . drunk," Leo finished for him, shrugging.

"Plenty drunk, if you ask me," Morozov's freckles disappeared in a red flush of anger. "Just so drunk that I got up this morning and find him sprawled on the davenport in the lobby, full dress and all, and you couldn't have awakened him with an earthquake."

"Well," Leo asked indifferently, "what of it?"

"It was a grand party," said Antonina Pavlovna. "And how Leo can spend money! It was thrilling to watch. Really, L darling, you were too reckless, though."

"What did I do? I don't remember."

"Well, I didn't mind it when you lost so much on roulette, and it was cute when you paid them ten rubles every cheap glass you broke, but really you didn't have to the waiters hundred-ruble tips."

"Why not? Let them see the difference between a gentleman and the Red trash of today."

"Yes, but you didn't have to pay the orchestra fifty rubles to shut up every time they played something you didn't like. And then, when you chose the prettiest girl in the c

whom you'd never seen before, and you offered her any price she named to undress before the guests, and you stuck those hundreds down her décolleté . . ."

"Well," Leo shrugged, "she had a beautiful body."

"Let's go, Leo," said Kira.

"Wait a minute, Lev Sergeievitch," Morozov said slowly, putting his saucer down. "Just where did you get all that money?"

"I don't know," said Leo. "Tonia gave it to me."

"Antonina, where did you . . ."

"Oh?" Antonina Pavlovna raised her eyebrows and looked bored. "I took that package you had under the waste basket."

"Tonia!" Morozov roared, jumping up, so that the dishes rattled on the table. "You didn't take that!"

"Certainly I took it," Antonina Pavlovna tilted her chin defiantly. "And I'm not accustomed to being reproached about money. I took it and that's that, so what are you going to do about it?"

"My God! Oh, my God! Oh, my Lord in Heaven!" Morozov grasped his head and nodded, rocking like a toy with a broken spring. "What are we going to do? That was the money we owe Syerov. It was due yesterday. And we haven't got another ruble on hand . . . and Syerov . . . well, if I don't deliver it today, he'll kill me. . . . What am I going to do? . . . He won't be kept waiting and . . ."

"Oh, he won't, eh?" Leo chuckled coldly. "Well, he'll wait and he'll like it. Stop whining like a mutt. What are you afraid of? He can do nothing to us and he knows it."

"I'm surprised at you, Lev Sergeievitch," Morozov growled, his freckles drowned in red. "You get your fair share, don't you? Do you think it was honorable to take . . ."

"Honorable?" Leo laughed resonantly, his gaiest, lightest, most-insulting laughter. "Are you speaking to me? My dear friend, I've acquired the great privilege of not having to worry about that word at all. Not at all. In fact, if you find something particularly dishonorable—you may be sure I'll do it. The lower—the better. I wish you a good day. . . . Come on, Kira." He looked around uncertainly: "Where the hell's my hat?"

"Don't you remember, Leo?" Antonina Pavlovna reminded him gently. "You lost it."

"That's right, I did W
of them. So long."

Kira called a sleigh and

When they were alone in their room, Leo said brusquely: "I won't have any criticism from you or anybody else. And you, particularly, have no complaints to make. I haven't slept with any other woman, if that's what you're worried about, and that's all you have to know."

"I wasn't worried, Leo. I have no complaints to make and no criticism. But I want to speak to you. Will you listen?"

He said: "Sure," indifferently, and sat down.

She knelt before him and slipped her arms around him and shook her hair back, her eyes wide, intent, her voice tense with the calm of a last effort: "Leo, I can't reproach you. I can't blame you. I know what you're doing. I know why you're doing it. But listen: it's not too late; they haven't caught you; you still have time. Let's make an effort, a last one: let's save all we can and apply for a foreign passport. Let's run to the point of the earth that's the farthest from this damned country."

He looked into her flaming eyes with eyes that were like mirrors which could not reflect a flame any longer. "Why bother?" he asked.

"Leo, I know what you'll say. You have no desire to live. You don't care any more. But listen: do it without desire. Even if you don't believe you'll ever care again. Just postpone your final judgment on yourself; postpone it till you get there. When you're free in a human country again—then see if you still want to live."

"You little fool! Do you think they give foreign passport to men with my record?"

"Leo, we have to try. We can't give up. We can't go on for one minute without that hope ahead of us. Leo, it can't get you! I won't let it get you!"

"Who? The G.P.U.? How are you going to stop it?"

"No! Not the G.P.U. Forget the G.P.U. There's something worse, much worse. It got Victor. It got Andrei. It got mother. It won't get you."

"What do you mean, it got Victor? Are you comparing me to that bootlicking rat, that . . ."

"Leo, the bootlicking and all those things—that's nothing. There's something much worse that it's done to Victor, underneath, deeper, more final—and the bootlicking, it's only consequence. It does that. It kills something. Have you ever seen plants grown without sunlight, without air? I won't let it do that to you. Let it take a hundred and fifty million innocent creatures. But not you, Leo! Not you, my highest reference . . ."

"What an exaggerated expression! Where did you get that?" She stared at him, repeating: "Where did I . . ."

"Really, Kira, sometimes I wonder why you've never outgrown that tendency to be so serious about everything. Nothing is getting me. Nothing is doing anything to me. I'm doing what I please, which is more than you can say about anyone else these days."

"Leo, listen! There's something I want to do—to try. We have a lot of things to untangle, you and I both. And it's not easy. Let's try to slash it all off, at once."

"By doing what?"

"Leo, let's get married."

"Huh?" He stared at her incredulously.

She repeated: "Let's get married."

He threw his head back and laughed. He laughed resonantly, a clear, light, icy laughter, as he had laughed at Andrei Taganov, as he had laughed at Morozov. "What's this, Kira? The make-an-honest-woman-of-you nonsense?"

"No, it's not that."

"Rather late for the two of us, isn't it?"

"Why not, Leo?"

"What for? Do we need it?"

"No."

"Then why do it?"

"I don't know. But I'm asking it."

"That's not reason enough to do something senseless. I'm not in a mood to become a respectable husband. If you're afraid of losing me—no scrap of paper, scribbled by a Red clerk, is going to hold me."

"I'm not afraid of losing you. I'm afraid that you will lose yourself."

"But a couple of rubles at the Zags and the Upravdom's blessing will save my soul, is that it?"

"Leo, I have no reasons to offer. But I'm asking it."

"Are you delivering an ultimatum?"

She said softly, with a quiet smile of surrender and resignation: "No."

"Then we'll forget about it."

"Yes, Leo."

He slipped his hands under her armpits and pulled her up into his arms, and said wearily: "You crazy, hysterical child! You drive yourself into a fit over some weird fear—Now forget about it. We'll save every ruble from now on if you want. You can put it away for a trip to Moscow."

San Francisco or the planet Jupiter. And we won't talk about it again. All right?"

He was smiling, his arrogant smile on a face that remained incredibly beautiful, a face that was like a drug to her, inexplicable, unconditional, consummate like music. She buried her head on his shoulder, repeating helplessly, hopelessly, a name as a drug: "Leo . . . Leo . . . Leo . . ."

X

Pavel Syerov had a drink before he came to his office. He had another drink in the afternoon. He had telephoned Morozov and a voice he knew to be Morozov's had told him that the Citizen Morozov was not at home. He paced up and down his office and smashed an inkstand. He found a misspelled word in a letter he had dictated, and threw the letter, crumpled into a twisted ball, at his secretary's face. He telephoned Morozov and got no answer. A woman telephoned him and her soft, lisping voice said sweetly, insistently: "But, Pavlusha darling, you promised me that bracelet!" A speculator brought a bracelet tied in the corner of a dirty handkerchief, and refused to leave it without the full amount in cash. Syerov telephoned Morozov at the Food Trust; a secretary demanded to know who was calling; Syerov slammed the receiver down without answering. He roared at a ragged applicant for a job that he would turn him over to the G.P.U. and ordered his secretary to throw out all those waiting to see him. He left the office an hour earlier than usual and slammed the door behind him.

He walked past Morozov's house on his way home and hesitated, but saw a militia-man on the corner and did not enter.

At dinner—which had been sent from a communal kitchen two blocks away, and was cold, with grease floating over the cabbage soup—Comrade Sonia said: "Really, Pavel, I've got to have a fur coat. I can't allow myself to catch a cold—you know—for the child's sake. And no rabbit fur, either. I know you can afford it. Oh, I'm not saying anything about anyone's little activities, but I'm just keeping my eyes open."

He threw his napkin into the soup and left the table without eating.

He called Morozov's house and let the telephone ring for five minutes. There was no answer. He sat on the bed and emptied a bottle of vodka. Comrade Sonia left for a meeting of the Teachers' Council of an Evening School for Illiterate Women House Workers. He emptied a second bottle.

Then he rose resolutely, swaying a little, pulled his belt tight across his fur jacket and went to Morozov's house.

He rang three times. There was no answer. He kept his finger on the bell button, leaning indifferently against the wall. He heard no sound behind the door, but he heard steps rising up the stairs and he flung himself into the darkest corner of the landing. The steps died on the floor below and he heard a door opening and closing. He could not let himself be seen waiting there, he remembered dimly. He reached for his notebook and wrote, pressing the notebook to the wall, in the light of a street lamp outside:

MOROZOV, YOU GOD-DAMN BASTARD!

If you don't come across with what's due me before tomorrow morning, you'll eat breakfast at the G.P.U., and you know what that means.

Affectionately,

PAVEL SYEROV.

He folded the note and slipped it under the door.

Fifteen minutes later, Morozov stepped noiselessly out of his bathroom and tiptoed to the lobby. He listened nervously but heard no sound on the stair-landing. Then he noticed the faint blur of white in the darkness, on the floor.

He picked up the note and read it, bending under the dining-room lamp. His face looked gray.

The telephone rang. He shuddered, frozen to the spot, as if the eyes somewhere behind that ringing bell could see him with the note in his hand. He crammed the note deep into his pocket and answered the telephone trembling.

whirled upon her ferociously: "If it weren't for you and that damn lover of yours . . ."

Antonina Pavlovna shrieked: "He's not my lover—yet! If he were, do you think I'd be squatting around a sloppy old fool like you?"

They had a quarrel.

Morozov forgot about the note in his pocket.

*

The European roof garden had a ceiling of glass panes; it looked like a black void staring down, crushing those below more implacably than a steel vault. There were lights; yellow lights that looked dimmed in an oppressive haze which was cigarette smoke, or heat, or the black abyss above. There were white tables and yellow glints in the silverware.

Men sat at the tables. Yellow sparks flashed in their diamond studs and in the beads of moisture on their red, flushed faces. They ate; they bent eagerly over their plates; they chewed hurriedly, incredulously; they were not out on a care-free evening in a gay night spot; they were *eating*.

In a corner, a yellowish bald head bent over a red steak on a white plate; the man cut the steak, smacking his fleshy red lips. Across the table, a red-headed girl of fifteen ate hastily, her head drawn into her shoulders; when she raised her head, she blushed from the tip of her short, freckled nose to her white, freckled neck, and her mouth was twisted as if she were going to scream.

A fierce jet of smoke swayed by a dark window pane; a thin individual, with a long face that betrayed too closely its future appearance as a skull, rocked monotonously on the back legs of his chair, and smoked without interruption, holding a cigarette in long, yellow fingers, spouting smoke out of wide nostrils frozen in a sardonic, unhealthy grin.

Women moved among the tables, with an awkward, embarrassed insolence. A head of soft, golden waves nodded unsteadily under a light, wide eyes in deep blue rings, a young mouth open in a vicious, sneering smile. In the middle of the room, a gaunt, dark woman with knobs on her shoulders, holes under her collar-bones and a skin the color of muddy coffee, was laughing too loudly, opening painted lips like a gash over strong white teeth and very red gums.

The orchestra played "John Gray." It flung brief, blunt notes out into space, as if tearing them off the strings before they

were ripe, hiding the gap of an uncapturable gaiety under a convulsive rhythm.

Waiters glided soundlessly through the crowd and bent over the tables, obsequious and exaggerated, and their flabby jowls conveyed expressions of respect, and mockery, and pity for those guilty, awkward ones who made such an effort to be gay.

Morozov did remember that he had to raise money before morning. He came to the European roof garden, alone. He sat at three different tables, smoked four different cigars and whispered confidentially into five different ears that belonged to corpulent men who did not seem to be in a hurry. At the end of two hours, he had the money in his wallet.

He mopped his forehead with relief, sat alone at a table in a dark corner and ordered cognac.

Stepan Timoshenko leaned so far across a white table cloth that he seemed to be lying on, rather than sitting at, the table. His head was propped on his elbow, his fingers on the nape of his broad neck; he had a glass in his other hand. When the glass was empty, he held it uncertainly in the air, wondering how to refill it with one hand; he solved the problem by dropping the glass with a sonorous crash and lifting the bottle to his lips. The maitre d'hotel looked at him nervously, sidewise, frowning; he frowned at the jacket with the rabbit fur collar, at the crumpled sailor cap sliding over one ear, at the muddy shoes flung out onto the satin train of a woman at the next table. But the maitre d'hotel had to be cautious; Stephan Timoshenko had been there before; everyone knew that he was a Party member.

A waiter slid unobtrusively up to his table and gathered the broken glass into a dust-pan. Another waiter brought a sparkling clean glass and slipped his fingers gently over Timoshenko's bottle, whispering: "May I help you, citizen?"

"Go to hell!" said Timoshenko and pushed the glass across the table with the back of his hand. The glass vacillated on the edge and crashed down. "I'll do as I please!" Timoshenko roared, and heads turned to look at him. "I'll drink out of a bottle if I please. I'll drink out of two bottles!"

"But, citizen . . ."

"Want me to show you how?" Timoshenko asked, his eyes gleaming ominously.

"No, indeed, citizen," the waiter said hastily.

"Go to hell," said Timoshenko with soft persuasion. "I don't like your snoot. I don't like any of the snoots around

here." He rose, swaying, roaring: "I don't like any of the damn snoots around here!"

He staggered among the tables. The maitre d'hotel whispered gently at his elbow: "If you're not feeling well, citizen . . ."

"Out of my way!" bellowed Timoshenko, tripping over a woman's slippers.

He had almost reached the door, when he stopped suddenly and his face melted into a wide, gentle smile. "Ah," he said. "A friend of mine. A dear friend of mine!"

He staggered to Morozov, swung a chair high over someone's head, planted it with a resounding smash at Morozov's table and sat down.

"I beg your pardon, citizen?" Morozov gasped, rising.

"Sit still, pal," said Timoshenko and his huge tanned paw pressed Morozov's shoulder down, like a sledge hammer, so that Morozov fell back on his chair with a thud. "Can't run away from a friend, Comrade Morozov. We're friends, you know. Old friends. Well, maybe you don't know me. Stepan Timoshenko's the name. Stepan Timoshenko. . . . Of the Red Baltfleet," he added as an after-thought.

"Oh," said Morozov. "Oh."

"Yep," said Timoshenko, "an old friend and admirer of yours. And you know what?"

"No," said Morozov.

"We gotta have a drink together. Like good pals. We gotta have a drink. Waiter!" he roared so loudly that a violinist missed a note of "John Gray."

"Bring us two bottles!" Timoshenko ordered when a waiter bowed hesitantly over his shoulder. "No! Bring us three bottles!"

"Three bottles of what, citizen?" the waiter asked timidly.

"Of anything," said Timoshenko. "No! Wait! What's the most expensive? What is it that the good, fat capitalists guzzle in proper style?"

"Champagne, citizen?"

"Make it champagne and damn quick! Three bottles and two glasses!"

When the waiter brought the champagne, Timoshenko poured it and planted a glass before Morozov. "There!" said Timoshenko with a friendly smile. "Going to drink with me, pal?"

"Yes, co . . . comrade," said Morozov meekly. "Thank you, comrade."

"Your health, Comrade Morozov!" said Timoshenko, solemnly, raising his glass. "To Comrade Morozov, citizen of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics!"

They clinked their glasses. Morozov glanced around furtively, helplessly, but no help was coming. He drank, the glass trembling at his lips. Then he smiled ingratiatingly: "This was very nice of you, comrade," he muttered, rising. "And I appreciate it very much, comrade. Now if you don't mind. I've got to be going and . . ."

"Sit still," ordered Timoshenko. He refilled his glass and raised it, leaning back, smiling, but his smile did not seem friendly any longer and his dark eyes were looking at Morozov steadily, sardonically. "To the great Citizen Morozov, the man who beat the revolution!" he said and laughed resonantly, and emptied the glass in one gulp, his head thrown back.

"Comrade . . ." Morozov muttered through lips he could barely force open, "comrade . . . what do you mean?"

Timoshenko laughed louder and leaned across the table toward Morozov, his elbows crossed, his cap far back on his head, over sticky ringlets of dark hair. The laughter stopped abruptly, as if slashed off. Timoshenko said softly, persuasively, with a smile that frightened Morozov more than the laughter: "Don't look so scared, Comrade Morozov. You don't have to be afraid of me. I'm nothing but a beaten wretch, beaten by you, Comrade Morozov, and all I want is to tell you humbly that I know I'm beaten and I hold no grudge. Hell, I hold a profound admiration for you, Comrade Morozov. You've taken the greatest revolution the world has ever seen and patched the seat of your pants with it!"

"Comrade," said Morozov with a blue-lipped determination, "I don't know what you're talking about."

"Oh, yes," said Timoshenko ruefully. "Oh, yes, you do. You know more about it than I do, more than millions of young fools do, that watch us from all over the world with worshipping eyes. You must tell them, Comrade Morozov. You ~~have~~ have a lot to tell them."

"Honestly, comrade, I . . ."

"For instance, you know how you made us do it? ~~I don't know~~ All I know is that we've done it. We made a revolution. We had red banners. The banners said that we made it for the world proletariat. We had fools who thought in their hearts that we made it for all those downtrodden who suffer on this earth. But you and me, Comrade Morozov, we have a secret. We know, but we won't tell."

world doesn't want to hear it. We know that the revolution—it was made for you, Comrade Morozov, and hats off to you!"

"Comrade whoever you are, comrade," Morozov moaned, "what do you want?"

"Just to tell you it's yours, Comrade Morozov."

"What?" Morozov asked, wondering if he was going insane.

"The revolution," said Timoshenko pleasantly. "The revolution. Do you know what a revolution is? I'll tell you. We killed. We killed men in the streets, and in the cellars, and aboard our ships. . . . Aboard our ships . . . I remember . . . There was one boy—an officer—he couldn't have been more than twenty. He made the sign of the cross—his mother must've taught him that. He had blood running out of his mouth. He looked at me. His eyes—they weren't frightened any more. They were kind of astonished. About something his mother hadn't taught him. He looked at me. That was the last thing. He looked at me."

Drops were rolling down Timoshenko's jowls. He filled a glass and it tottered uncertainly in his hand, trying to find his mouth, and he drank without knowing that he was drinking, his eyes fixed on Morozov's.

"That's what we did in the year nineteen-hundred-and-seventeen. Now I'll tell you what we did it for. We did it so that the Citizen Morozov could get up in the morning and scratch his belly, because the mattress wasn't soft enough and it made his navel itch. We did it so that he could ride in a big limousine with a down pillow on the seat and a little glass tube for flowers by the window, lilies-of-the-valley, you know. So that he could drink cognac in a place like this. So that he could scramble up, on holidays, to a stand all draped in red bunting and make a speech about the proletariat. We did it, Comrade Morozov, and we take a bow. Don't glare at me like that, Comrade Morozov, I'm only your humble servant, I've done my best for you, and you should reward me with a smile, really, you have a lot to thank me for!"

"Comrade!" Morozov panted. "Let me go!"

"Sit still!" Timoshenko roared. "Pour yourself a glass and drink. Do you hear me? Drink, you bastard! Drink and listen!"

Morozov obeyed; his glass tinkled, shaking, against the bottle.

"You see," said Timoshenko, as if each word were tearing his throat on its way out, "I don't mind that we're beaten. I don't mind that we've taken the greatest of crimes on our

shoulders and then let it slip through our fingers. I wouldn't mind it if we had been beaten by a tall warrior in a steel helmet, a human dragon spitting fire. But we're beaten by a louse. A big, fat, slow, blond louse. Ever seen lice? The blond ones are the fattest. . . . It was our own fault. Once, men were ruled with a god's thunder. Then they were ruled with a sword. Now they're ruled with a Primus. Once, they were held by reverence. Then they were held by fear. Now they're held by their stomachs. Men have worn chains on their necks, and on their wrists, and on their ankles. Now they're enchained by their rectums. Only you don't hold heroes by their rectums. It was our own fault."

"Comrade, for God's sake, comrade, why tell it all to me?"

"We started building a temple. Do we end with a chapel? No! And we don't even end with an outhouse. We end with a musty kitchen with a second-hand stove! We set fire under a kettle and we brewed and stirred and mixed blood and fire and steel. What are we fishing now out of the brew? A new humanity? Men of granite? Or at least a good and horrible monster? No! Little puny things that wiggle. Little things that can bend both ways, little double-jointed spirits. Little things that don't even bow humbly to be whipped. No! They take the lash obediently and whip themselves! Ever sat at a social-activity club meeting? Should. Do you good. Learn a lot about the human spirit."

"Comrade!" Morozov breathed. "What do you want? Is it money you want? I'll pay. I'll . . ."

Timoshenko laughed so loudly that heads turned and Morozov cringed, trying not to be noticed. "You louse!" Timoshenko roared, laughing. "You fool, near-sighted, demented louse! Who do you think you're talking to? Comrade Victor Dunaev? Comrade Pavel Syerov? Comrade . . ."

"Comrade!" Morozov roared, so that heads turned to him, but he did not care any longer. "You . . . you . . . you have no right to say that! I have nothing whatever to do with Comrade Syerov! I . . ."

"Say," Timoshenko remarked slowly, "I didn't say you had. Why the excitement?"

"Well, I thought . . . I . . . you . . ."

"I didn't say you had," Timoshenko repeated. "I only said you should have. You and he and Victor Dunaev. And about one million others—with Party cards and stamps affixed. The winners and the conquerors. Those who crawl. That, pal, is the great slogan of the men of the future: those who crawl."

Listen, do you know how many millions of eyes are watching us across lands and oceans? They're not very close and they can't see very well. They see a big shadow rising. They think it's a huge beast. They're too far to see that it's soft and brownish and fuzzy. You know, fuzzy, a glistening sort of fuzz. They don't know that it's made of cockroaches. Little, glossy, brown cockroaches, packed tight, one on the other, into a huge wall. Little cockroaches that keep silent and wiggle their whiskers. But the world is too far to see the whiskers. That's what's wrong with the world, Comrade Morozov: they don't see the whiskers!"

"Comrade! Comrade, what are you talking about?"

"They see a black cloud and they hear thunder. They've been told that behind the cloud, blood is running freely, and men fight, and men kill, and men die. Well, what of it? They, those who watch, are not afraid of blood. There's an honor in blood. But do they know that it's not blood we're bathed in, it's pus? Listen, I'll give you advice. If you want to keep this land in your tentacles, tell the world that you're chopping heads off for breakfast and shooting men by the regiment. Let the world think that you're a huge monster to be feared and respected and fought honorably. But don't let them know that yours is not an army of heroes, nor even of fiends, but of shriveled bookkeepers with a rupture who've learned to be arrogant. Don't let them know that you're not to be shot, but to be disinfected. Don't let them know that you're not to be fought with cannons, but with carbolic acid!"

Morozov's napkin was crumpled into a drenched ball in his st. He wiped his forehead once more. He said, trying to make his voice gentle and soothing, trying to rise imperceptibly: "You're right, comrade. Those are very fine sentiments. I agree with you absolutely. Now if you'll allow . . ."

"Sit down!" roared Timoshenko. "Sit down and drink a toast. Drink it or I'll shoot you like a mongrel. I still carry a gun, you know. Here . . ." he poured and a pale golden trickle ran down the table cloth to the floor. "Drink to the men who took a red banner and wiped their ass with it!"

Morozov drank.

Then he put his hand in his pocket and took out a handkerchief to mop his forehead. A crumpled piece of paper fell to the floor.

It was the swift, ferocious jerk, with which Morozov plunged down for it, that made Timoshenko's fist dart out

and seize Morozov's hand. "What's that, pal?" asked Timoshenko.

Morozov's foot kicked the paper out of reach and it rolled under an empty table. Morozov said indifferently, little damp beads sparkling under his wide nostrils: "Oh, that? Nothing, comrade. Nothing at all. Just some scrap of waste paper."

"Oh," said Timoshenko, watching him with eyes that were alarmingly sober. "Oh, just a scrap of waste paper. Well, we'll let it lie there. We'll let the janitor throw it in the waste basket."

"Yes," Morozov nodded eagerly, "that's it. In the waste basket. Very well put, comrade." He giggled, mopping his forehead. "We'll let the janitor throw it in the waste basket. Would you like another drink, comrade? The bottle's empty. The next one's on me. Waiter! Another bottle of the same."

"Sure," said Timoshenko without moving. "I'll have another drink."

The waiter brought the bottle. Morozov filled the glasses, leaning solicitously over the table. He said, regaining his voice syllable by syllable: "You know, comrade, I think you misunderstood me, but I don't blame you. I can see your motives and I sympathize thoroughly. There are so many objectionable—er—shall we say dishonorable?—types these days. One has to be careful. We must get better acquainted, comrade. It's hard to tell at a glance, you know, and particularly in a place like this. I bet you thought I was a—a speculator, or something. Didn't you? Very funny, isn't it?"

"Very," said Timoshenko. "What are you looking down at, Comrade Morozov?"

"Oh!" Morozov giggled, jerking his head up. "I was just looking at my shoes, comrade. They're sort of tight, you know. Uncomfortable. Guess it's because I'm on my feet so much, you know, in the office."

"Uh-huh," said Timoshenko. "Shouldn't neglect your feet. Should take a hot bath when you come home, a pan of hot water with a little vinegar. That's good for sore feet."

"Oh, indeed? I'm glad you told me. Yes, indeed, thank you very much. I'll be sure and try it. First thing when I get home."

"About time you were getting home, isn't it, Comrade Morozov?"

"Oh! . . . well, I guess . . . well, it's not so late yet and . . ."

"I thought you were in a hurry a little while ago."

"I . . . well, no, I can't say that I'm in any particular hurry, and besides, such a pleasant . . ."

"What the matter, Comrade Morozov? Anything you don't want to leave around here?"

"Who, me? I don't know what that could be, comrade . . . comrade . . . what did you say your name was, comrade?"

"Timoshenko. Stepan Timoshenko. It isn't that little scrap of waste paper down there under the table, by any chance?"

"Oh, that? Why, Comrade Timoshenko, I'd forgotten all about that. What would I want with it?"

"I don't know," said Timoshenko slowly.

"That's just it, Comrade Timoshenko, nothing. Nothing at all. Another drink, Comrade Timoshenko?"

"Thanks."

"Here you are, comrade."

"Anything wrong under the table, Comrade Morozov?"

"Why no, Comrade Timoshenko. I was just bending to tie my shoe lace. The shoe lace is unfastened."

"Where?"

"Well, isn't that funny? It really isn't unfastened at all. See? And I thought it was. You know how it is, these Soviet . . . these shoe laces nowadays. Not solid at all. Not dependable."

"No," said Timoshenko, "they tear like twine."

"Yes," said Morozov, "just like twine. Just, as you would say, like—like twine. . . . What are you leaning over for, Comrade Timoshenko? You're not comfortable. Why don't you move over here like this, you'll be more . . ."

"No," said Timoshenko, "I'm just fine here where I am. With a fine view of the table there. I like that table. Nice legs it has. Hasn't it? Sort of artistic, you know."

"Quite right, comrade, very artistic. Now on the other hand, comrade, there, on our left, isn't that a pretty blonde there, by the orchestra? Quite a figure, eh?"

"Yes, indeed, comrade. . . . It's nice shoes you have, Comrade Morozov. Patent leather, too. Bet you didn't get those in a co-operative."

"No . . . that is . . . to tell you the truth . . . well, you see . . ."

"What I like about them is that bulb. Right there, on the toes. Like a bump on someone's forehead. And shiny, too. Yep, those foreigners sure know how to make shoes."

"Speaking of the efficiency of production, comrade, take for instance, in the capitalistic countries . . . in the . . . in the . . ."

"Yes, Comrade Morozov, in the capitalistic countries?"

It was Morozov who leaped for the letter. It was Timo-

shenko who caught his wrist with fingers like talons, and for one brief moment they were on their hands and knees on the floor, and their eyes met silently like those of two beasts in deadly battle. Then Timoshenko's other hand seized the letter, and he rose slowly, releasing Morozov, and sat down at the table. He was reading the letter, while Morozov was still on his hands and knees, staring up at him with the eyes of a man awaiting the verdict of a court-martial.

MOROZOV, YOU GOD-DAMN BASTARD!

If you don't come across with what's due me before tomorrow morning, you'll eat breakfast at the G.P.U., and you know what that means,

Affectionately,

PAVEL SYEROV.

Morozov was sitting at the table when Timoshenko raised his head from the letter. Timoshenko laughed as Morozov had never heard a man laugh.

Timoshenko rose slowly, laughing. His stomach shook, and his rabbit fur collar, and the sinews of his bare throat. He swayed a little and he held the letter in both hands. Then his laughter died down slowly, smoothly, like a gramophone record unwinding, to a low, coughing chuckle on a single dry note. He slipped the letter into his pocket and turned slowly, his shoulders stooped, his movements suddenly awkward, humble. He shuffled heavily, uncertainly to the door. At the door, the maitre d'hotel glanced at him sidewise. Timoshenko returned the glance; Timoshenko's glance was gentle.

Morozov sat at the table, one hand frozen in mid-air in an absurd, twisted position, like the hand of a paralytic. He heard Timoshenko's chuckles dropping down the stairway; monotonous, disjointed chuckles that sounded like hiccoughs, like barks, like sobs.

He jumped up suddenly. "Oh my God!" he moaned. "Oh, my God!"

He ran, forgetting his hat and coat, down the long stairs, out into the snow. The road, white, silent street, Timoshenko was nowhere.

drank vodka. Whenever he heard the telephone or the door bell ringing, he crouched, his head in his shoulders, and bit his knuckles. Nothing happened.

At dinner time, Antonina Pavlovna brought the evening paper and threw it to him, snapping: "What the hell's the matter with you today?"

He glanced through the paper. There were news items on the front page:

In the village Vasilkino, in the Kama region, the peasants, goaded by the counter-revolutionary hoarder element, burned the local Club of Karl Marx. The bodies of the Club president and secretary, Party comrades from Moscow, were found in the charred ruins. A G.P.U. squad is on its way to Vasilkino.

In the village Sverskoe, twenty-five peasants were executed last night for the murder of the Village Correspondent, a young comrade from the staff of a Communist Union of Youth newspaper in Samara. The peasants refused to divulge the name of the murderer.

On the last page was a short item:

The body of Stepan Timoshenko, former sailor of the Baltic Fleet, was found early this morning under a bridge, on the ice of Obukhovsky Canal. He had shot himself through the mouth. No papers, save his Party card, were found on the body to explain the reason for his suicide.

Morozov wiped his forehead, as if a noose had been slipped off his throat, and drank two glasses of vodka.

When the telephone rang, he swaggered boldly to take the receiver, and Antonina Pavlovna wondered why he was chuckling.

"Morozov?" a muffled voice whispered over the wire.

"That you, Pavlusha?" Morozov asked. "Listen, pal, I'm awfully sorry, but I have the money and . . ."

"Forget the money," Syerov hissed. "It's all right. Listen . . . did I leave you a note yesterday?"

"Why, yes, but I guess I deserved it and . . ."

"Have you destroyed it?"

"Why?"

"Nothing. Only you understand what it could . . . Have you destroyed it?"

Morozov looked at the evening paper, grinned and said: "Sure. I have. Forget about it, pal."

He held the paper in his hand all evening long.

"The fool!" he muttered under his breath, so that Antonina Pavlovna looked at him inquisitively, chin forward. "The damn fool! He lost it. Wandered about all night, God knows where, the drunken fool. He lost it!"

Morozov did not know that Stepan Timoshenko had come home from the European roof garden and sat at a rickety table in his unheated garret and written painstakingly a letter on a piece of brown wrapping paper, in the light of a dying candle in a green bottle; that he had folded the letter carefully and slipped it into an old envelope and slipped another scrap of paper, wrinkled and creased, into the envelope, and written Andrei Taganov's address on it; that he had sealed the letter and had gone, steadily, unhurriedly, down the creaking stairs into the street.

The letter on the brown wrapping paper said:

DEAR FRIEND ANDREI,

I promised to say goodbye and here it is. It's not quite what I promised, but I guess you'll forgive. I'm sick of seeing what I see and I can't stand to see it any longer. To you—as my only legacy—I'm leaving the letter you will find enclosed. It's a hard legacy, I know. I only hope that you won't follow me—too soon.

Your friend,

STEPAN TIMOSHENKO.

XI

Pavel Syerov sat at the desk in his office, correcting the type-written copy of his next speech on "Railroads and the Class Struggle." His secretary stood by the desk, watching anxiously the pencil in his hand. The window of his office opened upon one of the terminal platforms. He raised his head just in time to notice a tall figure in a leather jacket disappearing down the platform. Syerov jerked forward, but the man was gone.

"Hey, did you see that man?" he snapped at the secretary.

"No, Comrade Syerov. Where?"

"Never mind. It doesn't matter. I just thought it was someone I knew. Wonder what he's doing around here?"

An hour later, Pavel Syerov left his office, and—walking down the stairs, on his way to the street, chewing sunflower seeds and spitting out their shells—saw the man in the leather jacket again. He had not been mistaken: it was Andrei Taganov.

Pavel Syerov stopped, and his brows moved closer together, and he spit one more shell out of the corner of his mouth. Then he approached Andrei casually, and said: "Good evening, Comrade Taganov."

Andrei answered: "Good evening, Comrade Syerov."

"Thinking of taking a trip, Andrei?"

"No."

"Hunting train speculators?"

"No."

"Been shifted to the G.P.U. transport section?"

"No."

"Well, I'm glad to see you. A rare person to see, aren't you? So busy you have no time for old friends any more. Have some sunflower seeds?"

"No, thank you."

"Don't have the dirty habit? Don't dissipate at all, do you? No vices, but one, eh? Well, I'm glad to see you taking an interest in this old station which is my home, so to speak. Been around for an hour or so, haven't you?"

"Any more questions to ask?"

"Who, me? I wasn't asking any questions. What would I be questioning you for? I was just being sociable, so to speak. One must be sociable once in a while, if one doesn't want to be branded as an individualist, you know. Why don't you drop in to see me while you're in these parts?"

"I may," said Andrei slowly. "Good-bye, Comrade Syerov."

Syerov stood, frowning, an unbroken sunflower seed between his teeth, and watched Andrei descending the stairs.

*

The clerk wiped his nose with his thumb and forefinger, wiped the linseed oil off the bottle's neck with his apron, and asked: "That all today, citizen?"

"That's all," said Andrei Taganov.

The clerk tore a piece of newspaper and wrapped the bottle, greasy stains spreading on the paper.

"Doing good business?" Andrei asked.

"Rotten," the clerk answered, shrugging his shoulders in an old blue sweater. "You're the first customer in three hours, I guess. Glad to hear a human voice. Nothing to do here but sit and scare mice off."

"That's too bad. Taking a loss, then?"

"Who, me? I don't own the joint."

"Then I guess you'll lose your job soon. The boss will be coming to do his own clerking."

"Who? My boss?" The clerk made a hoarse, cackling sound that was laughter, opening a wide hole with two broken, blackened teeth. "Not my boss, he won't. I'd like to see the elegant Citizen Kovalensky slinging herrings and linseed oil."

"Well, he won't be elegant long with such poor business."

"Maybe he won't," said the clerk, "and maybe he will."

"Maybe," said Andrei Taganov.

"Fifty kopeks, citizen."

"Here you are. Good night, citizen."

*

Antonina Pavlovna had tickets for the new ballet at the Marinsky Theater. It was a "profunion" show and Morozov had received the tickets at the Food Trust. But Morozov did not care for ballet and he had a school meeting to attend, where he was to make a speech on the "Proletarian Distribution of Food Products," so he gave the tickets to Antonina Pavlovna. She invited Leo and Kira to accompany her. "Well, of course, it's supposed to be a revolutionary ballet," she explained. "The first Red ballet. And, of course, you know my attitude on politics, but then, one should be broad-minded artistically, don't you think so? At least, it's an interesting experiment."

Kira refused the invitation. Leo left with Antonina Pavlovna. Antonina Pavlovna wore a jade green gown embroidered in gold, too tight across her stomach, and carried mother-of-pearl opera glasses on a long gold handle.

Kira had made a date with Andrei. But when she left the tramway and walked through the dark streets to the palace garden, she noticed her feet slowing down of their own will, her body tense, unyielding, fighting her, as if she were walking forward against a strong wind. It was as if her body remembered that which she was trying to forget: the night before, a night such as her first one in the gray and silver room she had shared with Leo for over three years. Her body felt

pure and hallowed; her feet were slowing down to retard her progress toward that which seemed a sacrilege because she did desire it and did not wish to desire it tonight.

When she reached the top of the long, dark stairs and Andrei opened the door, she asked: "Andrei, will you do something for me?"

"Before I kiss you?"

"No. But right after. Will you take me to a motion picture tonight?"

He kissed her, his face showing nothing but the ever-incredulous joy of seeing her again, then said: "All right."

They walked out together, arm in arm, fresh snow squeaking under their feet. The three largest film theaters on Nevsky displayed huge cotton signs with red letters:

THE HIT OF THE SEASON!
NEW MASTERPIECE OF THE SOVIET CINEMA!
"RED WARRIORS"

*A gigantic epic of the struggle of red heroes
in the civil war!*

A SAGA OF THE PROLETARIAT!
*A titanic drama of the heroic unknown masses
of Workers and Soldiers!*

One theater also bore the sign:

COMRADE LENIN SAID: "OF ALL THE ARTS, THE MOST
IMPORTANT ONE FOR RUSSIA IS THE CINEMA!"

The theater entrances blazed in streams of white light. The cashiers watched the passersby wistfully and yawned. No one stopped to look at the display of stills.

"You don't want to see that," said Andrei.

"No," said Kira.

The fourth and smaller theater played a foreign picture. It was an old, unknown picture with no stars, no actors' names announced; three faded stills were pasted in the show window, presenting a lady with too much make-up and a dress fashionable ten years ago.

"We might as well see that," said Kira.

The box office was closed.

"Sorry, citizens," said the usher, "no seats left. All sold out for this show and the next one. The foyer's jammed with people waiting."

"Well," said Kirà, as they turned away with resignation, "it may as well be 'The Red Warriors.' "

The foyer of the huge, white-columned "Parisiana" was empty. The picture was on, and no one was allowed to enter in the middle of a show. But the usher bowed eagerly and let them enter.

The theater was dark, cold, and seemed silent under the roar of the orchestra, with the echoing silence of a huge, empty room. A few heads dotted the waste of grayish, empty rows.

On the screen, a mob of ragged gray uniforms ran through mud, waving bayonets. A mob of ragged gray uniforms sat around fires, cooking soup. A long train crawled slowly through endless minutes, open box cars loaded with a mob of ragged gray uniforms. "A MONTH LATER" said a title. A mob of ragged gray uniforms ran through mud, waving bayonets. A sea of arms waved banners. A mob of ragged gray uniforms crawled down trench tops, against a black sky. "THE BATTLE OF ZAVRASHINO" said a title. A mob in patent leather boots shot a mob in bast shoes lined again a wall. "THE BATTLE OF SAMSONOVO" said a title. A mob of ragged gray uniforms ran through mud, waving bayonets. "THREE WEEKS LATER" said a title. A long train crawled into a sunset. "THE PROLETARIAT STAMPED ITS MIGHTY BOOT DOWN THE TREACHEROUS THROAT OF DEPRAVED ARISTOCRATS" said a title. A mob in patent leather boots danced in a gaudy brothel, amid broken bottles and half-naked women who looked at the camera. "BUT THE SPIRIT OF OUR RED WARRIORS FLAMED WITH LOYALTY TO THE PROLETARIAN CAUSE" said a title. A mob of ragged gray uniforms ran through mud, waving bayonets. There was no plot, no hero. "THE AIM OF PROLETARIAN ART," a poster in the foyer had explained, "IS THE DRAMA AND COLOR OF MASS LIFE."

In the intermission before the second show, Andrei asked: "Do you want to see the beginning of that?"

"Yes," said Kira. "It's still early."

"I know you don't like it."

"I know you don't, either. It's funny, Andrei, I had a chance to go to the new ballet at the Marinsky tonight, and I didn't go because it was revolutionary, and here I am looking at this epic."

" . . . that you don't like. I know. Still, don't you think that you're mentioning it too often?"

"Kira, you're not interested in politics, are you?"

"No. Why?"

"You've never wanted to sacrifice your life senselessly, to have years torn out of it for no good reason, years of jail or exile? Have you?"

"What are you driving at?"

"Keep away from Leo Kovalensky."

Her mouth was open and her hand was lifted in the air and she did not move for a long second. Then she asked, and no words had ever been so hard to utter:

"What—do—you—mean—Andrei?"

"You don't want to be known as the friend of a man who is friendly with the wrong kind of people."

"What people?"

"Several. Our own Comrade Syerov, for one."

"But what has Leo . . ."

"He owns a certain private food store, doesn't he?"

"Andrei, are you being the G.P.U. agent with me and . . ."

"No, I'm not questioning you. I have nothing to learn from you. I'm just wondering how much you know about his affairs—for your own protection."

"What . . . what affairs?"

"That's all I can tell you. I shouldn't have told you even that much. But I want to be sure that you don't let your name be implicated, by chance, in any way."

"Implicated—in what?"

"Kira, I'm not a G.P.U. agent—with you or to you."

The lights went out and the orchestra struck up the "Internationale."

On the screen, a mob of dusty boots marched down a dry, clotted earth. A huge, gray, twinkling, shivering rectangle of boots hung before them, boots without bodies, thick, cobbled soles, old leather gnarled, warped into creases by the muscles and the sweat inside; the boots were not slow and they were not in a hurry; they were not hoofs and they did not seem to be human feet; they rolled forward, from heels to toes, from heels to toes, like gray tanks waddling, crushing, sweeping all before them, clots of earth crumbling into dust, gray boots, dead, measured, endless, lifeless, inexorable.

Kira whispered through the roar of the "Internationale": "Andrei, are you working on a new case for the G.P.U.?"

He answered: "No. On a case of my own."

On the screen, shadows in gray uniforms sat around fires under a black sky. Calloused hands stirred iron kettles; a mouth grinned wide over crooked teeth; a man played a harmonica, rocking from side to side with a lewd grin; a man twirled in a Cossack dance, his feet flashing, his hands clapping in time; a man scratched his beard; a man scratched his neck; a man scratched his head; a man chewed a crust of bread, crumbs rolling into the open collar of his tunic, into a black, hairy chest. They were celebrating a victory.

Kira whispered: "Andrei, do you have something to report to the G.P.U.?"

He answered: "Yes."

On the screen, a demonstration marched down a city street, celebrating a victory. Banners and faces swam slowly past the camera. They moved as wax figures pulled by invisible wires, young faces in dark kerchiefs, old faces in knitted shawls, faces in soldiers' caps, faces in leather hats, faces that looked alike, set and humorless, eyes flat as if painted on, lips soft and shapeless, marching without stirring, marching without muscles, with no will but that of the cobblestones pulled forward under their motionless feet, with no energy but that of the red banners as sails in the wind, no fuel but the stuffy warmth of millions of skins, millions of flaccid, doughy muscles, no breath but the smell of patched armpits, of warm, weary, bowed necks, marching, marching, marching in an even, ceaseless movement, a movement that did not seem alive.

Kira jerked her head with a shudder that ran down to her knees and gasped: "Andrei, let's go!"

He rose swiftly, obediently.

When he motioned to a sleigh driver in the street outside, she said: "No. Let's walk. Walk. With both feet."

He took her arm, asking: "What's the matter, Kira?"

"Nothing," she walked, listening to the living sound of her heels crunching snow. "I . . . I didn't like the picture."

"I'm sorry, dear. I don't blame you. I wish they wouldn't make those things, for their own sake."

"Andrei, you wanted to leave it all, to go abroad, didn't you?"

"Yes."

"Then why are you starting something . . . against someone . . . to help the masters you no longer want to serve?"

"I'm going to find out whether they're still worth serving."

"What difference would that make to you?"

"A difference on which the rest of my life may depend."

"What do you mean?"

"I'm giving myself a last chance. I have something to put before them. I know what they should do about it. I'm afraid I know also what they're going to do about it. I'm still a member of the Party. In a very short while, I'll know whether I'll remain a member of the Party."

"You're making a test, Andrei? At the cost of several lives?"

"At the cost of several lives that should be ended."

"Andrei!"

He looked at her white face, astonished: "Kira, what's the matter? You've never questioned me about my work. We've never discussed it. You know that my work deals with lives—and death, when necessary. It has never frightened you like this. It's something the two of us must keep silent about."

"Are you forbidding me to break that silence?"

"Yes. And there's something I have to tell you. Please listen carefully and don't answer me, because, you see, I don't want to know the answer. I want you to keep silent because I don't want to learn how much you know about the case I'm investigating. I'm afraid I know already that you're not quite ignorant about it. I'm expecting the highest integrity from the men I'm going to face. Don't make me face them with less than that on my part."

She said, trying to be calm, her voice quivering, a voice with a life and a terror of its own which she could not control:

Andrei, I won't answer. Now listen and don't question me. Please don't question me! I have nothing to tell you but this: I'm begging you—you understand—begging you with all there is in me, if I ever meant anything to you, this is the only time I want to claim it, I'm begging you, while it's still in your hands, to drop this case, Andrei! for one reason only, for me!"

He turned to her and she looked into a face she had never seen before, the implacable face of Comrade Taganov of the G.P.U., a face that could have watched secret executions in dark, secret cellars. He asked slowly: "Kira, what is that man to you?"

The tone of his voice made her realize that she could protect Leo best by remaining silent. She answered, shrugging: "Just a friend. We'll keep silent, Andrei. It's late. Will you take me home?"

But when he left her at her parents' house, she waited only to hear his steps dying around the corner. Then she ran through dark streets to the first taxi she could find and leaped in, ordering: "Marinsky Theater! As fast as you can go!"

In the dim, deserted lobby of the theater, she heard the thunder of the orchestra behind closed doors, a tuneless, violent jumble of sound.

"Can't go in now, citizen," said a stern usher.

She slipped a crumpled bill into his hand, whispering: "I have to find someone, comrade. . . . It's a matter of life and death . . . his mother is dying. . . ."

She slipped noiselessly between blue velvet curtains into a dark, half-empty theater. On the glittering stage a chorus of fragile ballerinas in short, flame-red tulle skirts fluttered, waving thin, powdered arms with gilded chains of papier-mâché, in a "Dance of the Toilers."

She found Leo and Antonio Pavlovna in comfortable arm-chairs in an empty row. They jumped up when they saw Kira slipping toward them down the long row of chairs, and someone behind them hissed: "Sit down!"

"Leo!" Kira whispered. "Come on! Right away! Something's happened!"

"What?"

"Come on! I'll tell you! Let's get out of here!"

He followed her up the dark aisle. Antonina Pavlovna waddled hurriedly after them, her chin pointing forward.

In a corner of the empty foyer, Kira whispered: "It's the G.P.U., Leo, they're after your store. They know something."

"What? How did you find out?"

"I just saw Andrei Taganov and he . . ."

"You saw Andrei Taganov? Where? I thought you were going to visit your parents."

"Oh, I met him on the street and . . ."

"What street?"

"Leo! Stop that nonsense! Don't you understand? We have no time to waste!"

"What did he say?"

"He didn't say much. Just a few hints. He told me to keep away from you if I didn't want to be arrested. He said you had a private food store, and he mentioned Pavel Syerov. He said he had a report to make to the G.P.U. I think he knows everything."

"So he told you to keep away from me?"

"Leo! You refuse to . . ."

"I refuse to be frightened by some jealous"

"Leo, you don't know him! He doesn't matter. And he's not jealous of you. Why?"

"What department of the G.P.U. is he"

"Secret service department."

"Not the Economic Section, then?"

"No. But he's doing it on his own."

"Well, come on. We'll call Morozov and Pavel Syerov. Let Syerov call his friend of the Economic Section and find out what your Taganov's doing. Don't get hysterical. Nothing to be afraid of. Syerov's friend will take care of it. Come on."

"Leo," Antonina Pavlovna panted, running after them, as they hurried to a taxi outside, "Leo, I had nothing to do with the store! If there's an investigation, remember, I had nothing to do with it! I only carried money to Syerov and I knew nothing about where it came from! Leo, remember!"

An hour later, a sleigh drove noiselessly up to the back entrance of the store that carried the sign "Lev Kovalensky. Food Products." Two men slipped silently down frozen, unlighted stairs to the basement, where Leo and the clerk were waiting with a dim old lantern. The newcomers made no sound. Leo pointed silently to the sacks and boxes. The men carried them swiftly up the stairs to the sleigh. The sleigh was covered with a large fur blanket. In less than ten minutes the basement was empty.

"Well?" Kira asked anxiously, when Leo came home.

"Go to bed," said Leo, "and don't dream of any G.P.U. agents."

"What did you do?"

"It's all done. We got rid of everything. It's on its way out of Red Leningrad this very minute. We had another load coming from Syerov tomorrow night, but we've cancelled that. We'll be running a pure little food store—for a while. Till Syerov checks up on things."

"Leo, I . . ."

"You won't start any arguments again. I've told you once: I'm not going to leave town. That would be the most dangerous, the most suspicious thing to do. And we have nothing to worry about. Syerov's too strong at the G.P.U. for any . . ."

"Leo, you don't know Andrei Taganov."

"No, I don't. But you seem to know him too well."

"Leo, they can't bribe him."

"Maybe not. But they can make him shut up."

"If you're not afraid . . ."

"Of course I'm not afraid!"

But his face was paler than usual and she noticed his hands, unbuttoning his coat, trembling.

"Leo, please! Listen!" she begged. "Leo, please! I . . ."
"Shut up!" said Leo.

XII

The executive of the Economic Section of the G.P.U. called Andrei Taganov into his office.

The office was in a part of the G.P.U. headquarters' building which no visitors ever approached and into which few employees were ever admitted. Those who were admitted spoke in low, respectful voices and never felt at ease.

The executive sat at his desk. He wore a military tunic, tight breeches, high boots and a gun on his hip. He had close-cropped hair and a clean-shaved face that betrayed no age. When he smiled, he showed short teeth and very wide, brownish gums. His smile betrayed no mirth, no meaning; one knew it was a smile only because the muscles of his cheeks creased and his gums showed.

He said: "Comrade Taganov, I understand you've been conducting some investigations in a case which comes under the jurisdiction of the Economic Section."

Andrei said: "I have."

"Who gave you the authority to do it?"

Andrei said: "My Party card."

The executive smiled, showing his gums, and asked: "What made you begin the investigation?"

"A piece of incriminating evidence."

"Against a Party member?"

"Yes."

"Why didn't you turn it over to us?"

"I wanted to have a complete case to report."

"Have you?"

"Yes."

"You intend to report it to the chief of your department?"

"Yes."

The executive smiled and said: "I suggest that you drop the entire matter."

Andrei said: "If this is an order, I'll remind you that you are not my chief. If it is advice, I do not need it."

The executive looked at him silently, then said: "Strict discipline and a straightforward loyalty are commendable traits, Comrade Taganov. However, as Comrade Lenin said, a Communist must be adaptable to reality. Have you considered the consequences of what you plan to expose?"

"I have."

"Do you find it advisable to make public a scandal involving a Party member—at this time?"

"That should have been the concern of the Party member involved."

"Do you know my . . . interest in that person?"

"I do."

"Does the knowledge make any difference in your plans?"

"None."

"Have you ever thought that I could be of service to you?"

"No. I haven't."

"Don't you think that it is an idea worth considering?"

"No. I don't."

"How long have you held your present position, Comrade Taganov?"

"Two years and three months."

"At the same salary?"

"Yes."

"Don't you think a promotion desirable?"

"No."

"You do not believe in a spirit of mutual help and co-operation with your Party comrades?"

"Not above the spirit of the Party."

"You are devoted to the Party?"

"Yes."

"Above all things?"

"Yes."

"How many times have you faced a Party Purge Committee?"

"Three times."

"Do you know that there is another purge coming?"

"Yes."

"And you're going to make your report on that case you've investigated—to your chief?"

"Yes."

"When?"

"At four o'clock this afternoon."

The executive looked at his wristwatch: "Very well. In an hour and a half then."

"Is that all?"

"That's all, Comrade Taganov."

*

A few days later, Andrei's chief called him into his office. The chief was a tall, thin man with a pointed blond beard and a gold pince-nez on a high, thin nose. He wore the expensive, blondish-brown suit of a foreign tourist; he had the long, knotty hands of a skeleton and the appearance of an unsuccessful college professor.

"Sit down," said the chief, and rose, and closed the door. Andrei sat down.

"Congratulations, Comrade Taganov," said the chief. Andrei inclined his head.

"You have done a valuable piece of work and rendered a great service to the Party, Comrade Taganov. You could not have chosen a better time for it. You have put into our hands just the case we needed. With the present difficult economic situation and the dangerous trend of public sentiment, the government has to show the masses who is responsible for their suffering, and show it in a manner that will not be forgotten. The treacherous counter-revolutionary activities of speculators, who deprive our toilers of their hard-earned food rations, must be brought into the full light of proletarian justice. The workers must be reminded that their class enemies are plotting day and night to undermine the only workers' government in the world. Our toiling masses must be told that they have to bear their temporary hardships patiently and lend their full support to the government which is fighting for their interests against such heavy odds, as the case you've discovered will display to the public. This, in substance, was the subject of my conversation with the editor of the *Pravda* this morning, in regard to the campaign we are starting. We shall make an example of this case. Every newspaper, every club, every public pulpit will be mobilized for the task. The trial of Citizen Kovalensky will be broadcast into every hamlet of the U.S.S.R."

"Whose trial, comrade?"

"The trial of Citizen Kovalensky. Oh, yes, of course, by the way, that letter of Comrade Syerov which you attached to your report on the case—was that the only copy of it in existence?"

"Yes, comrade."

"Who has read it besides yourself?"

"No one."

The chief folded his long, thin hands, the tips of his fingers meeting, and said slowly: "Comrade Taganov, you will forget that you've ever read that letter."

Andrei looked at him silently.

"This is an order from the committee which investigated your report. However, I shall take the time to explain, for I appreciate your efforts in the matter. Do you read the newspapers, Comrade Taganov?"

"Yes, comrade."

"Do you know what is going on in our villages at the present time?"

"Yes, comrade."

"Are you aware of the mood in our factories?"

"Yes, comrade."

"Do you realize the precarious equilibrium of our public opinion?"

"Yes, comrade."

"In that case, I do not have to explain to you why a Party member's name must be kept from any connection with a case of counter-revolutionary speculation. Is that clear?"

"Perfectly, comrade."

"You must be very careful to remember that you know nothing about Comrade Pavel Syerov. Am I understood?"

"Thoroughly, comrade."

"Citizen Morozov will resign from his position with the Food Trust—by reason of ill health. He will not be brought into the case, for it would throw an unfavorable light on our Food Trust and create a great deal of unnecessary comment. But the real culprit and dominant spirit of the conspiracy, Citizen Kovalensky, will be arrested tonight. Does that meet with your approval, Comrade Taganov?"

"My position does not allow me to approve, comrade. Only to take orders."

"Very well said, Comrade Taganov. Of course, Citizen Kovalensky is the sole legal, registered owner of that food store as we've checked. He is an aristocrat by birth and the son of a father executed for counter-revolution. He has been arrested before—for an illegal attempt to leave the country. He is living symbol of the class which our working masses know to be the bitterest enemy of the Soviets. Our working masses, justly angered by lengthy privations, by long hours of waiting in lines at our co-operatives, by lack of the barest necessities, will know who is to blame for their hardships. They will blow at the very heart of our e

omic life. The last descendant of a greedy, exploiting aristocracy will pay the penalty due every member of his class."

"Yes, comrade. A public trial with headlines in the papers and a radio microphone in the courtroom?"

"Precisely, Comrade Taganov."

"And what if Citizen Kovalensky talks too much and too near the microphone? What if he mentions names?"

"Oh, nothing to fear, Comrade Taganov. Those gentlemen are easy to handle. He'll be promised life to say only what he's told to say. He'll be expecting a pardon even when he hears his death sentence. One can make promises, you know. One doesn't always have to keep them."

"And when he faces the firing squad—there will be no microphone on hand?"

"Precisely."

"And, of course, it won't be necessary to mention that he was jobless and starving at the time he entered the employ of those unnamed persons."

"What's that, Comrade Taganov?"

"A helpful suggestion, comrade. It will also be important to explain how a penniless aristocrat managed to lay his hands on the very heart of our economic life."

"Comrade Taganov, you have a remarkable gift for platform oratory. Too remarkable a gift. It is not always an asset to an agent of the G.P.U. You should be careful lest it be appreciated and you find yourself sent to a nice post—in the Turkestan, for instance—where you will have full opportunity to display it. Like Comrade Trotzky, for instance."

"I have served in the Red Army under Comrade Trotzky."

"I wouldn't remember that too often, Comrade Taganov, if I were you."

"I won't, comrade. I shall do my best to forget it."

"At six o'clock tonight, Comrade Taganov, you will report for duty to search Citizen Kovalensky's apartment for any additional evidence or documents pertaining to this case. And you will arrest Citizen Kovalensky."

"Yes, comrade."

"That's all, Comrade Taganov."

"Yes, comrade."

*

The executive of the Economic Section c smiled, showing his gums, at Comrade Pavel S; coldly: "Hereafter, Comrade Syerov, you will

literary efforts to matters pertaining to your job on the railroad."

"Oh, sure, pal," said Pavel Syerov. "Don't worry."

"I'm not the one to worry in this case, I'll remind you."

"Oh, hell, I've worried till I'm seasick. What do you want? One has only so many hairs to turn gray."

"But only one head under the hair."

"What . . . what do you mean? You have the letter, haven't you?"

"Not any more."

"Where is it?"

"In the furnace."

"Thanks, pal."

"You have good reason to be grateful."

"Oh, sure. Sure, I'm grateful. A good turn deserves another. An eye for an eye . . . how does the saying go? I keep my mouth shut about some things and you keep others shut for me about my little sins. Like good pals."

"It's not as simple as that, Syerov. For instance, your aristocratic playmate, Citizen Kovalensky, will have to go on trial and . . ."

"Hell, do you think that will make me cry? I'll be only too glad to see that arrogant bum get his white neck twisted."

*

"Your health, Comrade Morozov, requires a long rest and a trip to a warmer climate," said the official. "That is why, in acknowledgment of your resignation, we are giving you this assignment to a place in a House of Rest. You understand?"

"Yes," said Morozov, mopping his forehead, "I understand."

"It is a pleasant sanatorium in the Crimea. Restful and quiet. Far from the noise of the cities. It will help your health a great deal. I would suggest that you take full advantage of the privilege for, let us say, six months. I would not advise you to hurry back, Comrade Morozov."

"No," said Morozov, "I won't hurry."

"And there's another advice I would like to give you, Comrade Morozov. You are going to hear a great deal, from the newspapers, about the trial of a certain Citizen Kovalensky for counter-revolutionary speculation. It would be wise to let your fellow patients in the sanatorium understand that you know nothing about the case."

"Of course, comrade. I don't know a thing about it. Not a thing."

The official bent toward Morozov and whispered bluntly, confidentially: "And if I were you, I wouldn't try to pull any wires for Kovalensky, even though he's going to the firing squad."

Morozov looked up into the official's face and drawled, his soft vowels blurring, trailing off into a whine, his wide, vertical nostrils quivering: "Who, me, pull any wires? For him? Why should I, comrade? Why should I? I had nothing to do with him. He owned that store. He alone. You can look up the registration. He alone. He can't prove I knew anything about . . . about anything. He alone. Sole owner. Lev Kovalensky—you can look it up."

*

Lavrov's wife opened the door.

She made a choked sound, like a hiccough, somewhere in her throat, and clamped her hand over her mouth, when she saw Andrei Taganov's leather jacket and the holster on his hip, and behind him—the steel blades of four bayonets.

Four soldiers entered, following Andrei. The last one slammed the door shut imperiously.

"Lord merciful! Oh, my Lord merciful!" wailed the woman, clasping a faded apron in both hands.

"Keep still!" ordered Andrei. "Where's Citizen Kovalensky's room?"

The woman pointed with a shaking finger and kept on pointing, foolishly, persistently, while the soldiers followed Andrei. She stared stupidly at the clothes rack in the lobby, at the old coats that seemed warm and creased to the lines of human bodies, hanging there while three thin, steel blades moved slowly past, and six boots stamped heavily, the floor sounding like a muffled drum. The soldier with the fourth bayonet remained standing at the door.

Lavrov jumped up when he saw them. Andrei crossed the room swiftly, without looking at him. A short, sharp movement of Andrei's hand, brusque and imperious as a lash, made one of the soldiers remain stationed at the door. The others followed Andrei into Leo's room.

Leo was alone. He sat in a deep armchair by the lighted fireplace, in his shirt sleeves, reading a book. The book was the first thing to move when the door was flung open—it descended slowly to the arm of the chair and

closed it. Then, Leo rose unhurriedly, the glow of the fire flickering on the white shirt on his straight shoulders.

He said, smiling, his smile a scornful arc: "Well, Comrade Taganov, didn't you know that some day we would meet like this?"

Andrei's face had no expression. It was set and motionless like a passport photograph; as if lines and muscles were hardened into something which had no human meaning, something which was a human face in shape only. He handed to Leo a paper bearing official stamps; he said, in a voice which was a human voice only because it made sounds that were of the human alphabet: "Search warrant, Citizen Kovalensky."

"Go ahead," said Leo, bowing sternly, graciously, as if to a guest at a formal reception. "You're quite welcome."

Two swift movements of Andrei's hand sent one soldier to a chest of drawers and the other to the bed. Drawers clattered open; white stacks of underwear fell to the floor, from under huge, dark fists that dug swiftly, expertly and slammed the drawers shut with a bang, one after the other. A white pile grew on the floor, around black boots glistening with melting snow. A quick hand ripped the satin cover off the bed, then the quilt and the sheets; the thrust of a bayonet split the mattress open and two fists disappeared in the cut.

Andrei opened the drawers of a desk. He went through them swiftly, mechanically, his thumb running the pages of books in a quick, fan-shaped whirl, with a swishing rustle like the shuffling of a pack of cards; he threw the books aside, gathering all notes and letters, shoving them into his brief case.

Leo stood alone in the middle of the room. The men took no notice of his presence, as if their actions did not concern him, as if he were only a piece of furniture, the last one to be torn open. He was half-sitting, half-leaning against a table, his two hands on the edge, his shoulders hunched, his long legs sliding forward. The logs creaked in the silence, and things thudded against the floor, and the papers rustled in Andrei's fingers.

"I'm sorry I can't oblige you," said Leo, "by letting you find secret plans to blow up the Kremlin and overthrow the Soviets, Comrade Taganov."

"Citizen Kovalensky," said Andrei, as if they had never met before, "you are speaking to a representative of the G.P.U."

"You didn't think I had forgotten that, did you?" said Leo.

A soldier stuck a bayonet into a pillow, and little white flakes of down fluttered up like snowdrops. Andrei jerked the

door of a cabinet open; the dishes and glasses tinkled, as he piled them swiftly, softly on the carpet.

Leo opened his gold cigarette case and extended it to Andrei.

"No, thank you," said Andrei.

Leo lighted a cigarette. The match quivered in his fingers for an instant, then grew steady. He sat on the edge of the table, swinging one leg, smoke rising slowly in a thin, blue column.

"The survival," said Leo, "of the fittest. However, not all philosophers are right. I've always wanted to ask them one question: the fittest—for what? . . . You should be able to answer it, Comrade Taganov. What are your philosophical convictions? We've never had a chance to discuss that—and this would be an appropriate time."

"I would suggest," said Andrei, "that you keep silent."

"And when a representative of the G.P.U. suggests," said Leo, "it's a command, isn't it? I realize that one should know how to respect the grandeur of authority under all circumstances, no matter how trying to the self-respect of those in power."

One of the soldiers raised his head and made a step toward Leo. A glance from Andrei stopped him. The soldier opened a wardrobe and took Leo's suits out, one by one, running his hand through the pockets and linings.

Andrei opened another wardrobe.

The wardrobe smelled of a fine French perfume. He saw a woman's dresses hanging in a row.

"What's the matter, Comrade Taganov?" asked Leo.

Andrei was holding a red dress.

It was a plain red dress with a patent leather belt, four buttons, a round collar and a huge bow.

Andrei held it spread out in his two hands and looked at it. The red cloth spurted in small puffs between his fingers.

Then his eyes moved, slowly, a glance like a weight grating through space, to the line of clothes in the wardrobe. He saw a black velvet dress he knew, a coat with a fur collar, a white blouse.

He asked: "Whose are these?"

"My mistress's," Leo answered, his eyes fixed on Andrei's face, pronouncing the word with a mocking contempt that suggested the infamy of obscenity.

Andrei's face had no expression, no human meaning. He looked down at the dress, his lashes like two black lines on his sunken cheeks. Then he straightened

"At nine o'clock, isn't it? We're all looking forward to it, Comrade Taganov. See you at nine."

"Yes," Andrei had answered.

He had walked slowly through the deep snow of the garden, up the long stairs, to his dark room.

A Club window was lighted in the palace and a yellow square fell across the floor. Andrei took off his cap, his leather jacket, his gun. He stood by the fireplace, kicking gray coals with his toe. He threw a log on the coals and struck a match.

He sat on a box by the fire, his hands hanging limply between his knees, his hands and his forehead pink in the darkness.

He heard steps on the landing outside, then a hand knocking sharply. He had not locked the door. He said: "Come in."

Kira came in. She slammed the door behind her and stood in the archway of his room. He could not see her eyes in the darkness; black shadows swallowed her eyes and forehead; but the red glow fell on her mouth, and her mouth was wide, loose, brutal.

He rose and stood silently, looking at her.

"Well?" she threw at him savagely. "What are you going to do about it?"

He said slowly: "If I were you, I'd get out of here."

She leaned against the archway, asking: "And if I don't?"

"Get out of here," he repeated.

She tore her hat off and flung it aside, she threw her coat off and dropped it to the floor.

"Get out, you—"

"—where?" she finished for him. "Certainly. I just want to be sure you know that that's what I am."

He asked: "What do you want? I have nothing to say to you."

"But I have. And you'll listen. So you've caught me, haven't you, Comrade Taganov? And you're going to have your revenge? You came with your soldiers, with a gun on your hip, Comrade Taganov of the G.P.U., and you arrested him? And now you're going to use all your influence, all your great Party influence, to see that he's put before the firing squad, aren't you? Perhaps you'll even ask for the privilege of giving the order to fire? Go ahead! Have your revenge. And this is mine. I'm not pleading for him. I have nothing to fear any more. But, at least, I can speak. And I'll speak. I have so much to say to you, to all of you, and I must speak for you."

long that it's going to tear me to pieces! I have nothing to lose. But you have."

He said: "Don't you think it's useless? Why say anything? If you have any excuses to offer . . ."

She laughed, a human laughter that did not sound human, that did not sound like laughter: "You fool! I'm proud of what I've done! Hear me! I don't regret it! I'm proud of it! So you think I loved you, don't you? I loved you, but I was unfaithful to you, on the side, as most women are? Well, then, listen: all you were to me, you and your great love, and your kisses, and your body, all they meant was only a pack of crisp, white, square, ten-ruble bills with a sickle and hammer printed in the corner! Do you know where those bills went? To a tubercular sanatorium in the Crimea. Do you know what they paid for? For the life of a man I loved long before I ever saw you, for the life of a body that had possessed mine before you ever touched it—and now you're holding him in one of your cells and you're going to shoot him. Why not? It's fair enough. Shoot him. Take his life. You've paid for it."

She saw his eyes, and they were not hurt, they were not angry. They were frightened. He said: "Kira . . . I . . . I . . . I didn't know."

She leaned back, and crossed her arms, and rocked softly, laughing: "So you loved me? So I was the highest of women, a woman like a temple, like a military march, like a god's statue? Remember who told me that? Well, look at me! I'm only a whore and you're the one who made the first payment! I sold myself—for money—and you paid it. Down in the gutter, that's where I belong, and your great love put me there. I thought you'd be glad to know that. Aren't you? So you think I loved you? I thought of Leo when you held me in your arms! When I spoke of love—I was speaking to him. Every kiss you got, every word, every hour was given to him, for him. I've never loved him as I loved him in your bed! . . . No, I won't leave you your memories. They're his. I love him. Do you hear me? I love him! Go ahead! Kill him. Nothing you can do to him will compare with what I've done to you. You know that, don't you?"

She stood, swaying, and her shadow rose to the ceiling, and the shadow rocked as if it were going to crash down.

He repeated helplessly, as if she were not present, as if he were hanging on to the syllables for support: "I didn't know. . . ."

unusual. Go through the garrets and basements where men live in your Red cities and see how many cases like this you can find. He wanted to live. You think everything that breathes can live? You've learned differently, I know. But he was one who could have lived. There aren't many of them, so they don't count with you. The doctor said he was going to die. And I loved him. You've learned what that means, too, haven't you? He didn't need much. Only rest, and fresh air, and food. He had no right to that, had he? Your State said so. We tried to beg. We begged humbly. Do you know what they said? There was a doctor in a hospital and he said he had hundreds on his waiting list."

She leaned forward, her voice soft, confidential, she spread her hands out, trying to explain, suddenly gentle and business-like and childishly insistent, her lips soft and a little bewildered and only her eyes fixed and in her eyes, alone, a horror that did not belong in a room where human beings lived but only in a morgue:

"You see, you must understand this thoroughly. No one does. No one sees it, but I do, I can't help it, I see it, you must see it, too. You understand? Hundreds. Thousands. Millions. Millions of what? Stomachs, and heads, and legs, and tongues, and souls. And it doesn't even matter whether they fit together. Just millions. Just flesh. Human flesh. And they—it—had been registered and numbered, you know, like tin cans on a store shelf. I wonder if they're registered by the person or by the pound? And they had a chance to go on living. But not Leo. He was only a man. All stones are cobblestones to you. And diamonds—they're useless, because they sparkle too brightly in the sun, and it's too hard on the eyes, and it's too hard under the hoofs marching into the proletarian future. You don't pave roads with diamonds. They may have other uses in the world, but of those you've never learned. That is why you had sentenced him to death, and others like him, an execution without a firing squad. There was a big commissar and I went to see him. He told me that a hundred thousand workers had died in the civil war and why couldn't one aristocrat die—in the face of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics? And what is the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics in the face of one man? But that is a question not for you to answer. I'm grateful to that commissar. He gave me permission to do what I've done. I don't hate him. You should hate him. What I'm doing to you—he did it first!"

He stood looking down at her. He said nothing. He did not move. He did not take his eyes off hers.

She walked toward him, her legs crossing each other, with a slow, unsteady deliberation, her body slouching back. She stood looking at him, her face suddenly empty and calm, her eyes like slits, her mouth a thin incision into a flesh without color. She spoke, and he thought that her mouth did not open, words sliding out, crushed, from between closed lips, a voice frightening because it sounded too even and natural:

"That's the question, you know, don't you? Why can't one aristocrat die in the face of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics? You don't understand that, do you? You and your great commissar, and a million others, like you, like him, that's what you brought to the world, that question and your answer to it! A great gift, isn't it? But one of you has been paid. I paid it. In you and to you. For all the sorrow your comrades brought to a living world. How do you like it, Comrade Andrei Taganov of the All-Union Communist Party? If you taught us that our life is nothing before that of the State—well then, are you really suffering? If I brought you to the last hell of despair—well then, why don't you say that one's own life doesn't really matter?" Her voice was rising, like a whip, lashing him ferociously on both cheeks. "You loved a woman and she threw your love in your face? But the proletarian mines in the Don Basin have produced a hundred tons of coal last month! You had two altars and you saw suddenly that a harlot stood on one of them, and Citizen Morozov on the other? But the Proletarian State has exported ten thousand bushels of wheat last month! You've had every beam knocked from under your life? But the Proletarian Republic is building a new electric plant on the Volga! Why don't you smile and sing hymns to the toil of the Collective? It's still there, your Collective. Go and join it. Did anything really happen to you? It's nothing but a personal problem of a private life, the kind that only the dead old world could worry about, isn't it? Don't you have something greater—greater is the word your comrades use—left to live for? Or do you, Comrade Taganov?"

He did not answer.

Her arms were thrown wide, and her breasts stood out under her old dress, panting, and he thought he could see every muscle of her body, a female's body in the last convulsion of rage. She screamed:

"Now look at me! Take a good look! I was born and I was alive and I knew what I wanted. What do you

ve in me? Why do you think I'm alive? Because I have a stomach and eat and digest the food? Because I breathe and work and produce more food to digest? Or because I know what I want, and that something which knows how to want isn't that life itself? And who—in this damned universe—who can tell me why I should live for anything but for that which I want? Who can answer that in human sounds that we should want. You came as a solemn army to bring a new life to men. You tore that life you knew nothing about, out of their guts—and you told them what it had to be. You took in the farthest corners of their souls—and you told them what it had to be. You came and you forbade life to the living. You've driven us all into an iron cellar and you've closed all doors, and you've locked us airtight, airtight till the blood vessels of our spirits burst! Then you stare and wonder what it's doing to us. Well, then, look! All of you who have eyes left—look!"

She laughed, her shoulders shaking, stepping close to him. She screamed at his face:

"Why do you stand there? Why don't you speak? Are you wondering why you've never known what I was? Well, here I am! Here's what's left after you took him, after you reached for the heart of my life—and do you know what that is? Do you know what it meant when you reached for my highest reverence . . ."

She stopped short. She gasped, a choked little sound, as if he had slapped her. She slammed the back of her hand against her mouth. She stood in silence, her eyes staring at something she had seen suddenly, clearly, fully for the first time.

He smiled, very slowly, very gently. He stretched out his hands, palms up, shrugging sadly an explanation she did not need.

She moaned: "Oh, Andreil . . ."

She backed away from him, her terrified eyes holding his.

He said slowly: "Kira, had I been in your place, I would have done the same—for the person I loved—for you."

She moaned, her hand at her mouth: "Oh, Andrei, Andrei, what have I done to you?"

She stood before him, her body sagging, looking sudden like a frightened child with eyes too big for its white face.

He approached her and took her hand from her mouth. He held it in his steady fingers. He said, and his words were

the steps of a man making an immense effort to walk too steadily: "You're done me a great favor by coming here and telling me what you've told. Because, you see, you've given me back what I thought I'd lost. You're still what I thought you were. More than I thought you were. Only . . . it's not anything you've done to me . . . it's what you had to suffer and I . . . I gave you that suffering, and all those moments were to you . . . to you . . ."

His voice broke. Then he shook his head, and his voice was firm as a doctor's: "Listen, child, we won't talk any more. I want you to keep silent for a little while, quite silent, even silent inside, you understand? Don't think. Try not to think. You're trembling. You have to rest. Here. I want you to sit down and just sit still for a few minutes."

He led her to a chair, and her head fell on his shoulder, and she whispered: "But . . . Andrei . . . You . . ."

"Forget that. Forget everything. Everything will be all right. Just sit still and don't think."

He lifted her gently and put her down on a chair by the fire. She did not resist. Her body was limp; her dress was pulled high above her knees. He saw her legs trembling. He took his leather jacket and wrapped it around her legs. He said: "This will keep you warm. It's cold here. The fire hasn't been on long enough. Now sit still."

She did not move. Her head fell back against the edge of the chair; her eyes were closed; one arm hung limply by her side, and the pink glow of the fire twinkled softly on her motionless hand.

He stood in the darkness by the fireplace and looked at her. Somewhere in the Club someone was playing the "Internationale."

He did not know how long he had stood there, when she stirred and raised her head. He asked: "Do you feel better now?"

Her head moved feebly, trying to nod.

He said: "Now let's put your coat on and I'll take you home. I want you to go to bed. Rest and don't think of anything."

She did not resist. Her head bent, she watched his fingers buttoning her coat. Then she raised her head, and her eyes looked into his. His eyes smiled at her, in quiet understanding, as he had smiled on their first meetings at the Institute.

He helped her down the long, frozen stairs. He called a sleigh at the garden gate and gave the address.

Leo's home. He buttoned the fur blanket over her knees, and his arm held her as the sleigh tore forward. They rode in silence.

When the sleigh stopped, he said: "Now I want you to rest for a few days. Don't go anywhere. There's nothing you can do. Don't worry about . . . him. Leave that to me."

The snow was deep at the curb by the sidewalk. He lifted her in his arms and carried her to the door and up the stairs. She whispered, and there was no sound, but he saw the movements of her lips: ". . . Andrei. . . ."

He said: "Everything will be all right."

He returned to the sleigh, alone. He gave the driver the address of the Party Club, where his comrades were waiting for a report on the agrarian situation.

*

". . . and you've locked us airtight, airtight till the blood vessels of our spirits burst! You've taken upon your shoulders a burden such as no shoulders in history have ever carried! You said that your end justified your means. But your end, comrades? What is your end?"

The chairman of the Club struck his desk with his gavel. "Comrade Taganov, I'm calling you to order!" he cried. "You will kindly confine your speech to the report on the agrarian situation."

A wave of motion rippled through the crowded heads, down the long, dim hall, and whispers rose, and somewhere in the back row someone giggled.

Andrei Taganov stood on the speaker's platform. The hall was dark. A single bulb burned over the chairman's desk. Andrei's black leather jacket merged into the black wall behind him. Three white spots stood out, luminous in the darkness: his two long, thin hands and his face. His hands moved slowly over a black void; his face had dark shadows in the eyesockets, in the hollows of the cheekbones. He said, voice dull, as if he could not hear his own words:

"Yes, the agrarian situation, comrades . . . In the last twelve months, twenty-six Party members have been assassinated in our outlying village districts. Eight clubhouses have been burned. Also three schools and a Communal Farm schoolhouse. The counter-revolutionary element of village board has to be crushed without mercy. Our Moscow chief cites as an example of the village Petrovshino where, upon their refusal to surrender their leaders, the peasants were lined in a

and every third one was shot, while the rest stood waiting. The peasants had locked three Communists from the city in the local Club of Lenin and boarded the windows on the outside and set fire to the house. . . . The peasants stood and watched it burn and sang, so they would hear no cries. . . . They were wild beasts. . . . They were beasts run amuck, beasts crazed with misery. . . . Perhaps there, too—in those lost villages somewhere so far away—there, too, they have girls, young and straight and more precious than anything on earth, who are driven into the last hell of despair, and men who love them more than life itself, who have to stand by and see it and watch it and have no help to offer! Perhaps they too . . .”

“Comrade Taganov!” roared the chairman. “I’m calling you to order!”

“Yes, Comrade Chairman. . . . Our Moscow chief cites the . . . What was I saying, Comrade Chairman? . . . Yes, the hoarders’ element in the villages . . . Yes . . . The Party has to take extraordinary measures against the counter-revolutionary element in the villages, that threatens the progress of our great work among the peasant masses. . . . Our great work. . . . We came as a solemn army and forbade life to the living. We thought everything that breathed knew how to live. Does it? And aren’t those who know how to live, aren’t they too precious to be sacrificed in the name of any cause? What cause is greater than those who fight for it? And aren’t those who know how to fight, aren’t they the cause itself and not the means?”

“Comrade Taganov!” roared the chairman. “I’m calling you to order!”

“I’m here to make a report to my Party comrades, Comrade Chairman. It’s a very crucial report and I think they should hear it. Yes, it’s about our work in the villages, and in the cities, and among the millions, the living millions. Only there are questions. There are questions that must be answered. Why should we be afraid if we can answer them? But if we can’t . . . ? If we can’t? . . . Comrades! Brothers! Listen to me! Listen, you consecrated warriors of a new life! Are we sure we know what we are doing? No one can tell men what they must live for. No one can take that right—because there are things in men, in the best of us, which are above all states, above all collectives! Do things? Man’s mind and his values. Look intently and fearlessly. Look and don’t tell me;

one, just tell yourself: what are you living for? Aren't you living for yourself and only for yourself? Call it your aim, your love, your cause—isn't it still *your* cause? Give your life, die for your ideal—isn't it still *your* ideal? Every honest man lives for himself. Every man worth calling a man lives for himself. The one who doesn't—doesn't live at all. You cannot change it. You cannot change it because that's the way man is born, alone, complete, an end in himself. No laws, no Party, no G.P.U. will ever kill that thing in man which knows how to say 'I.' You cannot enslave man's mind, you can only destroy it. You have tried. Now look at what you're getting. Look at those whom you allow to triumph. Deny the best in men—and see what will survive. Do we want the crippled, creeping, crawling, broken monstrosities that we're producing? Are we not castrating life in order to perpetuate it?"

"Comrade Ta . . ."

"Brothers! Listen! We have to answer this!" The two luminous white hands flew up over a black void, and his voice rose, ringing, as it had risen in a dark valley over the White trenches many years ago. "We have to answer this! If we don't—history will answer it for us. And we shall go down with a burden on our shoulders that will never be forgiven! What is our goal, comrades? What are we doing? Do we want to feed a starved humanity in order to let it live? Or do we want to strangle its life in order to feed it?"

"Comrade Taganov!" roared the chairman. "I deprive you of speech!"

"I . . . I . . ." panted Andrei Taganov, staggering down the platform steps. "I have nothing more to say. . . ."

He walked out, down the long aisle, a tall, gaunt, lonely figure. Heads turned to look at him. Somewhere in the back someone whistled through his teeth, a long, low, sneering triumphant sound.

When the door closed after him, someone whispered:

"Let Comrade Taganov wait for the next Party purge!"

XIV

Comrade Sonia sat at the table, in a faded lavender kimono, with a pencil behind her ear. The kimono did not meet in front, for she had grown to proportions that could not be concealed any longer. She bent under the lamp, running through the pages of a calendar; she seized the pencil once in a while, jotting hurried notes down on a scrap of paper, and bit the pencil, a purple streak spreading on her lower lip, for the pencil was indelible.

Pavel Syerov lay on the davenport, his stocking feet high on its arm, reading a newspaper, chewing sunflower seeds. He spat the shells into a pile on a newspaper spread on the floor by the davenport. The shells made a little sizzling sound, leaving his lips. Pavel Syerov looked bored.

"Our child," said Comrade Sonia, "will be a new citizen of a new state. It will be brought up in the free, healthy ideology of the proletariat, without any bourgeois prejudices to hamper its natural development."

"Yeah," said Pavel Syerov without looking up from his newspaper.

"I shall have it registered with the Pioneers, the very day it's born. Won't you be proud of your living contribution to the Soviet future, when you see it marching with other little citizens, in blue trunks and with a red kerchief around its neck?"

"Sure," said Pavel Syerov, spitting a shell down on the newspaper.

"We'll have a real Red christening. You know, no priests, only our Party comrades, a civil ceremony, and appropriate speeches. I'm trying to decide on a name and . . . Are you listening to me, Pavel?"

"Sure," said Syerov, sticking a seed between his teeth.

"There are many good suggestions for new, revolutionary names here in the calendar, instead of the foolish old saints' names. I've copied some good ones. Now what do you think? If it's a boy, I think Ninel would be nice."

"What the hell's that?"

"Pavel, I won't tolerate such language and such ignorance! You haven't given a single thought to your child's name, have you?"

"Well, say, I still have time, haven't I?"

"You're not interested, that's all, don't you fool me, Pavel Syerov, and don't you fool yourself thinking I'll forget it!"

"Aw, come on, now, Sonia, really, you know, I'm leaving the name up to you. You know best."

"Yes. As usual. Well, Ninel is our great leader Lenin's name—reversed. Very appropriate. Or we could call him Vil—that's for our great leader's initials—Vladimir Ilyitch Lenin. See?"

"Yeah. Well, either one's good enough for me."

"Now, if it's a girl—and I hope it's a girl, because the new woman is coming into her own and the future belongs, to a greater extent than you men imagine, to the free woman of the proletariat—well, if it's a girl, I have some good names here, but the one I like best is Octiabrina, because that would be a living monument to our great October Revolution."

"Sort of . . . long, isn't it?"

"What of it? It's a very good name and very popular. You know, Fimka Popova, she had a Red christening week before last and that's what she called her brat—Octiabrina. Even got a notice in the paper about it. Her husband was so proud—the blind fool!"

"Now, Sonia, you shouldn't insinuate . . ."

"Listen to the respectable moralist! That bitch Fimka is known as a . . . Oh, to hell with her! But if she thinks she's the only one to get a notice in the paper about her litter I'll . . . I've copied some other names here, too. Good modern ones. There's Marxina, for Karl Marx. Or else Communara. Or . . ."

Something clattered loudly under the table.

"Oh, hell!" said Comrade Sonia. "Those damn slippers of mine!" She wriggled uncomfortably on her chair, stretching out one leg, her foot groping under the table. She found the slipper and bent painfully over her abdomen, pulling the slipper on by a flat, wornout heel. "Look at the old junk I have to wear! And I need so many things, and with the child coming . . . You would choose a good time to write certain literary compositions and ruin everything, you drunken fool!"

"Now we won't bring that up again, Sonia. You know I was lucky to get out of it as I did."

"Yeah! Well, I hope your Kovalensky gets the firing squad

and a nice, loud trial. I'll see to it that the women of the Zhenotdel stage a demonstration of protest against Speculators and Aristocrats!" She fingered the pages of the calendar and cried: "Here's another good one for a girl: Tribuna. Or—Barricada. Or, if we prefer something in the spirit of modern science: Universiteta."

"That's too long," said Syerov.

"I prefer Octiabrina. More symbol to that. I hope it's a girl. Octiabrina Syerova—the leader of the future. What do you want it to be, Pavel, a boy or a girl?"

"I don't care," said Syerov, "so long as it isn't twins."

"Now I don't like that remark at all. It shows that you . . ."

They heard a knock at the door. The knock seemed too loud, too peremptory. Syerov, his head up, dropped the newspaper and said: "Come in."

Andrei Taganov entered and closed the door. Comrade Sonia dropped her calendar. Pavel Syerov rose slowly to his feet.

"Good evening," said Andrei.

"Good evening," said Syerov, standing, watching him fixedly.

"What's the big idea, Taganov?" Comrade Sonia asked, her voice low, husky, menacing.

Andrei did not turn to her. He said: "I want to speak to you, Syerov."

"Go ahead," said Syerov without moving.

"I said I want to speak to you alone."

"I said go ahead," Syerov repeated.

"Tell your wife to get out."

"My husband and I," said Comrade Sonia, "have no secrets from each other."

"You get out of here," said Andrei, without raising his voice, "and wait in the corridor."

"Pavel! If he . . ."

"I thought," said Pavel Syerov, "that you had learned a lesson in the last few days."

"I have," said Andrei.

"What else do you want?"

"You'd better put your shoes on while I'm talking. You're going out and you haven't much time to lose."

"Am I? Glad you let me in on the little secret. Otherwise I might have said that I had no such intention. And maybe I'll still say it. Where am I going, according to Comrade Mussolini Taganov?"

"To release Leo Kovalensky."

Pavel Syerov sat down heavily and his feet scattered the pile of sunflower-seed shells over the floor. "What are you up to, Taganov? Gone insane, have you?"

"You'd better keep still and listen. I'll tell you what you have to do."

"You'll tell me what I have to do? Why?"

"And after that, I'll tell you why you will do it. You'll dress right now and go to see your friend. You know what friend I mean. The one at the G.P.U."

"At this hour?"

"Get him out of bed, if necessary. What you'll tell him and how you'll tell it, is none of my business. All I have to know is that Leo Kovalensky is released within forty-eight hours."

"Now will you let me in on the little magic wand that will make me do it?"

"It's a little paper wand, Syerov. Two of them."

"Written by whom?"

"You."

"Huh?"

"Photographed from one written by you, to be exact."

Syerov rose slowly and leaned with both hands on the table. "Taganov, you God-damn rat!" he hissed. "It's a rotten time to be joking."

"Am I?"

"Well, I'll go to see my friend all right. And you'll see Leo Kovalensky all right—and it won't take you forty-eight hours, either. I'll see to it that you get the cell next to his and then we'll find out what documents . . ."

"There are two photostats of it, as I said. Only I don't happen to have either one of them."

"What . . . what did you . . ."

"They're in the possession of two friends I can trust. It would be useless to try to find out their names. You know me

well enough to discard any idea of the G.P.U. torture chamber, if that idea occurs to you. Their instructions are that if anything happens to me before Leo Kovalensky is out—the photostats go to Moscow. Also—if anything happens to him after he's out."

"You God-d . . ."

"You don't want those photostats to reach Moscow. Your friend won't be able to save your neck, then, nor his own, perhaps. You don't have to worry about my becoming a nuisance. All you have to do is release Leo Kovalensky and hush up this whole case. You'll never hear of those photostats again. You'll never see them, either."

Syerov reached for his handkerchief and wiped his forehead. "You're lying," he said hoarsely. "You've never taken any photostats."

"Maybe," said Andrei. "Want to take a chance on that?"

"Sit down," said Syerov, falling on the davenport.

Andrei sat down on the edge of the table and crossed his legs.

"Listen, Andrei," said Syerov. "Let's talk sense. All right, you're holding the whip. Still, do you know what you're asking?"

"No more than you can do."

"But, good Lord in Heaven, Andrei! It's such a big case and we're all set with a first-class propaganda campaign and the newspapers are getting headlines ready to . . ."

"Stop them."

"But how can I? How can I ask him? What am I going to tell him?"

"That's none of my business."

"But after he's already saved my . . ."

"Don't forget it's in his interests, too. He may have friends in Moscow. And he may have some who aren't friends."

"But, listen . . ."

"And when Party members can no longer be saved, they're the ones who get it worse than the private speculators, you know. Also a good occasion for first-class propaganda."

"Andrei, one of us has gone insane. I can't figure it out. Why do you want Kovalensky released?"

"That's none of your business."

"And if you've appointed yourself h— why the hell did you start the whole it, you know."

"You said that I had learned a lesson."

"Andrei, haven't you got any Party honor left? We need a good smashing bang at the speculators right now, with food conditions as they are and all the . . ."

"That doesn't concern me any longer."

"You damn traitor! You said it was the only copy of the letter in existence, when you turned it in!"

"Maybe I was lying then."

"Listen, let's talk business. Here—have a cigarette."

"No, thank you."

"Listen, let's talk as friend to friend. I take back all those things I said to you. I apologize. You can't blame me, you know how it is, you can see it's enough to make a fellow lose his mind a little. All right, you have your own game to play, I had mine and I made a misstep, but then we're both no innocent angels, as I can see, so we can understand each other. We used to be good friends, childhood friends, remember? So we can talk sensibly."

"About what?"

"I have an offer to make to you, Andrei. A good one. That friend of mine, he can do a lot if I slip a couple of words to him, as you know, I guess. I guess you know that I have enough on him for a firing squad, too. You're learning the same game, I see, and doing it brilliantly, I must hand it to you. All right, we understand each other. Now I can talk plain. I guess you know that your spot in the Party isn't so good any more. Not so good at all. And particularly after that little speech you made tonight—really, you know, it won't be so easy on you at the next Party purge."

"I know it."

"In fact, you're pretty sure to get the axe, you know."

"I do."

"Well, then, what do you say if we make a bargain? You drop this case and I'll see to it that you keep your Party card and not only that, but you can have any job you choose at the G.P.U. and name your own salary. No questions asked and no ill feeling. We all have our own way to make. You and I—we can help each other a lot. What do you say?"

"What makes you think that I want to remain in the Party?"

"Andrei! . . ."

"You don't have to worry about helping me at the next purge. I may be kicked out of the Party or I may be shot or I may be run over by a truck. That won't make any difference to you. Understand? But don't touch Leo Kovalensky. See that no one touches him. Watch him as you would watch your

own child, no matter what happens to me. I am not his guardian angel. You are."

"Andrei," Syerov moaned, "what is that damned aristocrat to you?"

"I've answered that question once."

Syerov rose unsteadily and drew himself up for a last, desperate effort: "Listen, Andrei, I have something to tell you. I thought you knew it, but I guess you don't. Only pull yourself together and listen, and don't kill me on the first word. I know there's a name you don't want to be mentioned, but I'll mention it. It's Kira Argounova."

"Well?"

"Listen, we're not mincing words, are we? Hell, not now we aren't. Well, then, listen: you love her and you've been sleeping with her for over a year. And. . . . Wait! Let me finish. . . . Well, she's been Leo Kovalensky's mistress all that time. . . . Wait! You don't have to take my word for it. Just check up on it and see for yourself."

"Why check up on it? I know it."

"Oh!" said Pavel Syerov.

He stood, rocking slowly from heels to toes, looking at Andrei. Then he laughed. "Well," he said, "I should have known."

"Get your coat," said Andrei, rising.

"I should have known," laughed Syerov, "why the saint of the Comm-party would go in for blackmail. You fool! You poor, virtuous, brainless fool! So that's the kind of grandstand you're playing! I should have known that the lofty heroics are a disease one never gets cured of! Come on, Andrei! Haven't you any sense left? Any pride?"

"We've talked long enough," said Andrei. "You seem to know a lot about me. You should know that I don't change my mind."

Pavel Syerov reached for his overcoat and pulled it on slowly, his pale lips grinning.

"All right, Sir Galahad or whatever it's called," he said. "Sir Galahad of the blackmail sword. You win—this time. It's no use threatening you with any retaliation. Fellows like you get theirs without any help from fellows like me. In a year—this little mess will be forgotten. I'll be running the railroads of the U.S.S.R. and buying satin diapers for my brat. You'll be standing in line for a pot of soup—and maybe you'll get it. But you'll have the satisfaction of knowing that your sweetheart is being . . . by a man you hate!"

"Yes," said Andrei.

"Good luck, Comrade Taganov."

*

Kira sat on the floor, folding Leo's underwear, putting it back into the drawer. Her dresses were still piled in a heap before her open wardrobe. Papers rustled all over the room when she moved. Down from the torn pillows fluttered like snow over the furniture.

She had not been out for two days. She had heard no sound from the world beyond the walls of her room. Galina Petrovna had telephoned once and wailed into the receiver; Kira had told her not to worry and please not to come over; Galina Petrovna had not come.

The Lavrovs had decided that their neighbor was not shaken by her tragedy; they heard no tears; they noticed nothing unusual in the frail little figure whom they watched sidewise when they crossed her room on their way to the bathroom. They noticed only that she seemed lazy, for her limbs fell and remained in any position, and it took her an effort to move them; and her eyes remained fixed on one spot and it took a bigger effort to shift her glance, and her glance was like a forty-pound sack of sand being dragged by a child's fist.

She sat on the floor and folded shirts neatly, creasing every pleat, slipping them cautiously into the drawer on the palms of her two hands. One shirt had Leo's initials embroidered on the breast pocket; she sat staring at it, without moving.

She did not raise her head when she heard the door opening.

"Allo, Kira," said a voice.

She fell back against the open drawer and it slammed shut with a crash. Leo was looking down at her. His lips drooped, but it was not a smile; his lips had no color; the circles under his eyes were blue and sharp, as if painted on by an amateur actor.

"Kira . . . please . . . no hysterics . . ." he said wearily.

She rose slowly, her arms swinging limply. She stood, her fingers crumpling the hair on her right temple, looking at him incredulously, afraid to touch him.

"Leo . . . Leo . . . you're not . . . free, are you?"

"Yes. Free. Released. Kicked out."

"Leo . . . how . . . how could it . . . happen . . . ?"

"How do I know? I thought you knew something about that."

She was kissing his lips, his neck, the muscles exposed by

his torn shirt collar, his hands, his palms. He patted her hair and looked indifferently over her head, at the wrecked room.

"Leo . . ." she whispered, looking up into his dead eyes, "what have they done to you?"

"Nothing."

"Did they . . . did they . . . I heard they sometimes . . ."

"No, they didn't torture me. They say they have a room for that, but I didn't have the privilege. . . . I had a nice cell all to myself and three meals a day, although the soup was rotten. I just sat there for two days and thought of what last words I could say before the firing squad. As good a pastime as any."

She took his coat off; she pushed him into an armchair; she knelt, pulling off his overshoes; she pressed her head to his knees for a second and jerked it away, and bent lower, to hide her face, and tied his unfastened shoestring with trembling fingers.

He asked: "Have I any clean underwear left?"

"Yes . . . I'll get it . . . only . . . Leo . . . I want to know . . . you haven't told me . . ."

"What is there to tell? I guess it's all over. The case is closed. They told me to see that I don't get into the G.P.U. for a third time." He added indifferently: "I think your friend Taganov had something to do with my release."

"He . . ."

"You didn't ask him to?"

"No," she said, rising. "No, I didn't ask him."

"Did they ruin the furniture completely, and the bed, too?"

"Who? . . . Oh, the search . . . No . . . Yes, I guess they have. . . . Leo!" she cried suddenly, so that he shuddered and looked at her, lifting his eyelids with effort. "Leo, have you nothing to say?"

"What do you want me to say?"

"Aren't you . . . aren't you glad to see me?"

"Sure. You look nice. Your hair needs combing."

"Leo, did you think of me . . . there?"

"No."

"You . . . didn't?"

"No. What for? To make it easier?"

"Leo, do you . . . love me?"

"Oh, what a question. . . . What a question at what a time. . . . You're getting feminine, Kira. . . . Really, it's not becoming."

WE THE LIVING

"I'm sorry, dear. I know it's foolish. I don't know why had to ask it just then. . . . You're so tired. I'll get your underwear and I'll fix your dinner. You haven't had dinner, have you?"

"No. I don't want any. Is there anything to drink in the house?"

"Leo . . . you're not going . . . again . . . to . . ."

"Leave me alone, will you? Get the hell out, please could you? Go to your parents . . . or something . . ."

"Leo!" She stood, her hands in her hair, staring down at him incredulously. "Leo, what have they done to you?"

His head was leaning back against the chair and she looked at the quivering white triangle of his neck and chin; he spoke, his eyes closed, only his lips moving, his voice even and flat:

"Nothing. . . . No one's going to do anything to me any more. . . . No one. . . . Not you nor anyone else. . . . No one can hurt me but you—and now you can't either. . . . No one. . . ."

"Leo!" She seized his limp, white-faced head and shook it furiously, pitilessly. "Leo! It can't get you like this! It won't get you!"

He seized her hand and flung it aside. "Will you ever come down to earth? What do you want? Want me to sing of life with little excursions to the G.P.U. between hymns? Afraid they've broken me? Afraid they'll get me? Want me to keep something that the mire can't reach, the more to suffer while it sucks me under? You're being kind to me, aren't you, because you love me so much? Don't you think you'd be kind if you'd let me fall into the mire? So that I'd be one with others and would feel nothing any longer . . . nothing . . . ever . . ."

A hand knocked at the door.

"Come in," said Kira.

Andrei Taganov came in. "Good evening, Kira," he said and stopped, seeing Leo.

"Good evening, Andrei," said Kira.

Leo raised his head with effort. His eyes looked faintly startled.

"Good evening," said Andrei, turning to him. "I know you were out already."

"I'm out. I thought you had reason to expect it."

"I did. But I didn't know they'd hurry. I'm sorry to be like this. I know you don't want to see any visitors."

"It's all right, Andrei," said Kira. "Sit down."

"There's something I have to tell you, Kira." He turned to Leo: "Would you mind if I took Kira out—for a few minutes?"

"I certainly would," Leo answered slowly. "Have you any secrets to discuss with Kira?"

"Leo!" Her voice was almost a scream. She added, quietly, her voice still trembling: "Come on, Andrei."

"No," said Andrei calmly, sitting down. "It isn't really necessary. It's not a secret." He turned to Leo. "I just wanted to spare you the necessity of . . . of feeling indebted to me, but perhaps it would be better if you heard it, too. Sit down, Kira. It's perfectly all right. It's about his release from the G.P.U."

Leo was looking at him fixedly, silently, leaning forward. Kira stood, her shoulders hunched, her hands clasped behind her back, as if they were tied. She looked at Andrei; his eyes were clear, serene.

"Sit down, Kira," he said almost gently.

She obeyed.

"There's something you should know, both of you," said Andrei, "for your own protection. I couldn't tell you sooner, Kira. I had to be sure that it had worked. Well, it has. I suppose you know who's really behind your release. It's Pavel Syerov. I want you to know what's behind him—in case you ever need it."

"It's you, isn't it?" asked Leo, a faint edge of sharpness in his voice.

"Leo, keep quiet. Please!" said Kira, turning away not to see his eyes watching her.

"It's a letter," Andrei continued calmly. "A letter he wrote and you know what that was. The letter had been sent to me . . . by someone else. Syerov has powerful friends. That saved him. But he's not very brave. That saved you. The letter had been destroyed. But I told him that I had photostats of it and that they were in the possession of friends who would send them to higher authorities in Moscow—unless you were released. The case is killed. I don't think they'll ever bother you again. But I want you to know this, so that you can hold it over Syerov's head—if you need it. Let him think that you know the photostats are in good hands—and on their way to Moscow, if he makes one step in your direction. That's all. I don't think you'll ever need it. But it's a useful protection to have, in these times—and with your social record."

"And . . . the photostats?" Kira whispered. "Where are they actually?"

"There are no photostats," said Andrei.

A truck thundered in the street below and the window panes trembled in the silence.

Andrei's eyes met Kira's. Their eyes met and parted swiftly, for Leo was watching them.

It was Leo who spoke first. He rose and walked to Andrei, and stood looking down at him. Then he said: "I suppose I should thank you. Well, consider me grateful. Only I won't say that I thank you from the bottom of my heart, because in the bottom of my heart I wish you had left me where I was."

"Why?" Andrei asked, looking up at him.

"Do you suppose Lazarus was grateful when Christ brought him back from the grave—if He did? No more than I am to you, I think."

Andrei looked at him steadily; Andrei's face was stern; his words were a threat: "Pull yourself together. You have so much to live for."

Leo shrugged and did not answer.

"You'll have to close that store of yours. Try to get a job. Better not a very prominent one. You'll hate it. But you'll have to stick to it."

"If I can."

"You can. You have to."

"Do I?" said Leo, and Kira saw his eyes watching Andrei closely.

She asked: "Andrei, why did you want to tell us about Syerov's letter?"

"So that you'd know in case . . . in case anything happened to me."

"What is going to happen to you, Andrei?"

"Nothing . . . Nothing that I know of." He added, rising: "Except that I'm going to be thrown out of the Party, I think."

"It . . . it meant a lot to you, didn't it . . . your Party?"

"It did."

"And . . . and when you lose something that meant a lot to you, does it . . . make any difference?"

"No. It still means a lot to me."

"Will you . . . hate them for it . . . for throwing you out?"

"No."

"Will you . . . forgive them . . . some day?"

"I have nothing to forgive. Because, you see, I have a lot to be grateful for, in the past, when I belonged to—to the Party. I don't want them to feel that they had been . . . unjust. Or

that I blame them. I can never tell them that I understand, but I would like them to know it."

"Perhaps they may be worried . . . although they have no right to question you any longer . . . about a life they may have broken . . ."

"If I could ask a favor—when they throw me out—I'd ask them not to worry about me. So that . . . in the Party annals . . . I won't become a wound, but a bearable memory. Then, my memories will be bearable, too."

"I think they'd grant you that . . . if they knew."

"I'd thank them . . . if I could."

He turned and took his cap from the table and said, buttoning his jacket: "Well, I have to go. Oh, yes, another thing: keep away from Morozov. I understand he's leaving town, but he'll be back and starting some new scheme. Keep away. He'll always get out of it and leave you to take the blame."

"Shall we . . . see you again, Andrei?" asked Kira.

"Sure. I'll be very busy—for a while. But I'll be around."

. . . Well, good night."

"Good night, Andrei."

"Wait a minute," said Leo suddenly. "There's something I want to ask you."

He walked to Andrei, and stood, his hands in his pockets, his lips spitting the words out slowly: "Just why did you do all this? Just what is Kira to you?"

Andrei looked at Kira. She stood, silent, erect, looking at them. She was leaving it up to him. He turned to Leo and answered: "Just a friend."

"Good night," said Leo.

The door had closed, and the door in Lavrov's room, and in the silence they heard the door in the lobby opening and closing behind Andrei. Then Kira tore forward suddenly. Leo could not see her face. He heard only a sound that was not a moan and not quite a cry. She ran out of the room and the door slammed shut behind her, and the crystals of the chandelier

He seized her arm and jerked her back into the house, into the dim little lobby at the foot of the stairs.

"Go back! Immediately!" he ordered.

"Andrei . . ." she stammered. "I . . . I . . ."

In the light of a lamp post from across the street, she saw him smiling slowly, gently, and his hand brushed the wet snowflakes off her hair. "Kira, don't you think it's better—like this?" he whispered. "If we don't say anything—and just leave it to . . . to our silence, knowing that we both understand, and that we still have that much in common?"

"Yes, Andrei," she whispered.

"Don't worry about me. You've promised that, you know. Go back now. You'll catch cold."

She raised her hand, and her fingers brushed his cheek slowly, barely touching it, from the scar on his temple to his chin, as if her trembling finger tips could tell him something she could not say. He took her hand and pressed it to his lips and held it for a long time. A car passed in the street outside; through the glass door, the sharp beam of a headlight swept over their faces, licked the wall and vanished.

He dropped her hand. She turned and walked slowly up the stairs. She heard the door opening and closing behind her. She did not look back.

When she returned to her room, Leo was telephoning. She heard him saying: "Allo, Tonia? . . . Yes, I just got out. . . . I'll tell you all about it. . . . Sure, come right over. . . . Bring some. I haven't got a drop in the house. . . ."

*

Andrei Taganov was transferred from the G.P.U. to the job of librarian in the library of the Lenin's Nook of the Club of Women Houseworkers in the suburb Lesnoe.

The clubhouse was a former church. It had old wooden walls that let the wind through, to rustle the bright posters inside; a slanting beam of unpainted wood in the center, supporting a roof ready to cave in; a window covered with boards over the dusty remnants of a glass pane; and a cast-iron "Bourgeoise" that filled the room with smoke. There was a banner of red calico over the former altar, and pictures of Lenin on the walls, pictures without frames, cut out of magazines: Lenin as a child, Lenin as a student, Lenin addressing the Petrograd Soviet, Lenin in a cap, Lenin without a cap, Lenin in the Council of People's Commissars, Lenin in his coffin. There were shelves of books in paper covers, a sign that read:

"Proletarians of the World, Unite!" and a plaster bust of Lenin with a scar of glue across his chin.

Andrei Taganov tried to hold on.

At five o'clock, when store windows made yellow squares in the snow and the lights of tramways rolled like colored beads high over the dark streets, he left the Technological Institute and rode to Lesnoe, sitting at the window of a crowded tramway, eating a sandwich, for he had no time to eat dinner. From six to nine, he sat alone in the library of the Lenin's Nook of the Club of Women Houseworkers, wrote card indexes, glued torn covers, added wood to the "Bourgeoise," numbered books, dusted shelves, and said when a woman's figure in a gray shawl waddled in, shaking snow off her heavy felt-boots:

"Good evening, comrade. . . . No, 'The A B C of Communism' is not in. I have your reservation, comrade. . . . Yes, this is a very good book, Comrade Samsonova, very instructive and strictly proletarian. . . . Yes, Comrade Danilova, it is recommended by the Party Council as indispensable to the political education of a conscientious worker. . . . Please, comrade, do not draw pictures on library books in the future. . . . Yes, I know, comrade, the stove isn't very good, it always smokes this way. . . . No, we don't carry any books on birth-control. . . . Yes, Comrade Selivanova, it is advisable to get acquainted with all of Comrade Lenin's works in order to understand our great leader's ideology. . . . Please close the door, comrade. . . . Sorry, comrade, we have no rest-room. . . . No, we have no books by Mussolini. . . . No, we carry no love stories, Comrade Ziablova. . . . No, Comrade Ziablova, I can't take you to the Club dance Sunday. . . . No, 'The A B C of Communism' is not in, comrade. . . ."

In the offices of the G.P.U. they whispered: "Let Comrade Taganov wait for the next Party purge."

Comrade Taganov did not wait for the next Party purge.

On a Saturday evening, he stood in line at the district co-operative for his food rations. The co-operative smelled of kerosene and rotted onions. There was a barrel of sauerkraut by the counter, a sack of dried vegetables, a can of linseed oil, and bars of bluish Joukov soap. A kerosene lamp smoked on the counter. A line of customers stretched across the long, bare room. There was only one clerk; he had a sty over his left eye and he looked sleepy.

A little man stood in line ahead of Andrei. His coat collar was loose, with a greenish, greasy patch at the nape of his neck. His neck was thin and wrinkled, with an Adam's apple

like a chicken's crow. He fingered his ration card nervously and fidgeted, peering past the line at the counter. He sniffled sonorously, for he had a cold, and scratched his Adam's apple.

He turned and grinned amicably up at Andrei. "Party comrade?" he asked, pointing a gnarled finger at the red star on Andrei's lapel. "Me, too, comrade. Sure, Party member. Here's my star, too. Cold weather we're having, comrade. Awfully cold weather. I hope the dried vegetables aren't all gone before our turn comes, comrade. They're wonderful for making soup Julienne. Really should have meat for it, though, but I'll tell you a nice little trick: just let them soak overnight, then boil them in plain water, and when it's almost ready drop in a spoonful of sunflower-seed oil, just one spoonful, and it makes such nice grease spots float on the surface, just the same as if you had meat, never tell the difference. Yes, I sure like soup Julienne. Hope they're not all gone before our turn comes. He's not very fast, that clerk. Only I'm not complaining. No, please, don't think I'm complaining, comrade."

He peered at the counter, fingered his card, counted the coupons, scratched his Adam's apple, and whispered confidentially: "Only I hope the vegetables aren't all gone. And another thing: I wish they would give us all the stuff in the same place. We wait for the general products here, and tomorrow two hours at the bread store, and day after-tomorrow here again for kerosene. Still, I don't mind. Next week, they say, we're going to get lard. That will be a holiday, won't it? That's something to look forward to, isn't it?"

When Andrei's turn came, the clerk shoved the rations at him, seized his card impatiently and growled: "What the hell's the matter, citizen? Your coupon's half torn off."

"I don't know," said Andrei. "I must have torn it accidentally."

"Well, I could have refused to accept it, you know. Not supposed to be half torn off. I got no time to check on all of you mugs. See that it's right, next month."

"Next . . . month?" said Andrei.

"Yeah, and next year, too, or else go empty-bellied. . . . Next!"

Andrei walked out of the co-operative with a pound of sauerkraut, a pound of linseed oil, a bar of soap and two pounds of dried vegetables for soup Julienne.

He walked slowly, and the streets were white with a hard, polished snow, and men's heels cut sharp ridges, creaking. Snow sparkled like salt crystals in the white circles of lamp

posts; and in the yellow cones of light at store windows, snow twinkled like splinters of powdered fire. Under a soft, glassy fuzz of frost, a poster showed a husky giant in a red blouse, raising two arms imperiously, triumphantly to the red letters:

WE ARE THE BUILDERS OF A NEW HUMANITY!

Andrei's steps were steady, calm. Andrei Taganov was always calm when he had reached a decision.

He turned on the light, when he entered his room, and put his packages on the table. He took off his cap and jacket, and hung them on a nail in the corner. A strand of hair fell across his forehead; he brushed it back with a long, slow movement. He had left a few coals smouldering in the fireplace and the room was hot. He took off his coat and straightened the wrinkled sleeves of his shirt.

He looked around slowly. He saw some books on the floor, and picked them up, and put them neatly into a pile on the table.

He lighted a cigarette and stood in the middle of the room, his elbow pressed to his side, like a wax figure in a store window, motionless but for the slow movement of one forearm with a hand tracing an even line in the air, carrying to his lips a cigarette held in two long, straight fingers. Nothing moved in the room but that arm with a motionless hand, and the smoke rising slowly, at his lips, then at his shoulder, then at his lips again, the ashes falling to the floor.

When he felt a hot breath on his fingers and saw that the cigarette had burned, he threw the stub into the fireplace and walked to his table. He sat down and opened the drawers, one by one, and looked through their contents. He took out a few papers and gathered them into a pile on the table.

Then he rose and walked to the fireplace. He knelt and tuffed newspapers into the coals and blew at them until bright orange tongues leaped up. He threw two logs into the fire and stood, watching them until he saw white flames spurt from the creaking bark. Then he walked to the table, took the pile of papers he had selected and threw it into the fire.

Then he opened the old boxes that served as his wardrobe. There were the things he did not want to be found in his room. He took a girl's black satin robe and threw it into the fire. He watched the cloth shriveling slowly in red, glowing, flameless patches, with long, thin columns of smoke, with a heavy, acrid odor. He watched it, his eyes quiet, astonished.

Then he threw in a pair of black satin slippers, and a little lace handkerchief, and a lace jacket with white ribbons. A sleeve of the jacket rolled out on the blackened bricks by the fireplace; he bent and, lifting it delicately, placed it back over the flames.

Then he found "The American Resident," the little glass toy with a black imp in a red liquid. He looked at it, and hesitated, and put it cautiously down into the smouldering place. The glass tube cracked, and the liquid sizzled on the coals with a sharp little puff of steam, and "The Resident" rolled into a crack among the coals.

Then he took out the black chiffon nightgown.

He stood at the fireplace and held the gown in both hands, and his fingers crumpled slowly, softly the light silk that felt like a handful of smoke. He held it on his two palms, and looked at his fingers through the thin black film, and moved his fingers slowly.

Then he knelt and spread it over the fire. For a second, the red coals were dimmed as under a clouded black glass; then the gown shuddered, as in a gust of wind, and a corner of the hem curled up, and a thin blue flame shot out of a fold at the neckline.

He rose and stood watching it; he watched glowing red threads running down the black cloth, and the black film twisting, as if it were breathing, curling, shrinking slowly into a smoke light as the cloth.

He stood for a long time, looking at the motionless black thing with twinkling red edges, that still had the shape of a gown, but it was not transparent any longer.

Then he touched it softly with his foot. It crumbled almost before it was touched, and little black flakes fluttered up into the chimney.

He turned away and sat down at the table. He sat with one forearm resting on the table and the other on his knee, his hands hanging down, ten fingers motionless, straight, broken only by the small angles of the joints, so still that they seemed grown fast to the air. An old alarm clock ticked on a shelf. His face was grave, quiet. His eyes were gentle, astonished, wondering. . . .

Then he turned, and took a piece of paper from the drawer and wrote: "No one is to be held responsible for my death." And signed: "Andrei Taganov."

There was only one shot, and because the frozen man

stairway was long and dark and led to a garden buried in deep snow, no one came up to investigate.

XV

On the front pages of the *Pravda*, a square in a heavy black frame carried the words:

The Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party expresses its profound grief at the death of a heroic fighter of the Revolution, former member of the Red Army, member of the Party since 1915,

COMRADE ANDREI TAGANOV

Under it, another square in a heavy black frame said:

The Leningrad Committee of the All-Union Communist Party sorrowfully announces the death of

COMRADE ANDREI TAGANOV

The funeral will take place tomorrow, on the Field of Victims of the Revolution. The procession will start from the Smolny Institute at 10 o'clock in the morning.

An editorial of the *Pravda* said:

Another name has been added to the glorious list of victims fallen on the field of honor of the Revolution. That name may not be known to many, but it represents and symbolizes the common ranks of our Party, the working heroes of our weekdays. In the person of Comrade Andrei Taganov, we pay a last tribute to the unknown warriors of the Army of the Proletariat. Comrade Taganov is dead. He committed suicide under the strain of a nervous collapse caused by overwork. His health and body were broken by the demanding constant task which his Party membership imposed.

rifice to the Revolution. Such is the sacrifice of a Party that rules, not for the sake of personal loot and fame, like the rulers of capitalistic countries, but for the sake of assuming the hardest work, the most pitiless tasks in the service of the Collective. And if, in these days of struggle and privation, some of us may weaken in spirit, let us look up to the great All-Union Communist Party that leads us, that spares not its strength, its energy, its lives. Let us make the Red funeral of a Party hero an occasion of tribute to our leaders. Let all toilers of Leningrad join in the procession that will escort Comrade Taganov to his last place of rest.

In an office of the G.P.U., a man with a smile that showed his gums, said to Pavel Syerov: "Well, he gave us a good opportunity for a lot of useful noise, after all. You making the opening speech?"

"Yeah," said Syerov.

"Don't forget his Red Army record and all that. Well, I hope this will shut them up, those damn fools, some of those old dotards of the 1905 vintage, who showed an inclination to talk too much about his pre-October Party card and other things, the Kovalensky case among other things."

"Forget it," said Pavel Syerov.

*

The toilers of Leningrad marched behind a red coffin.

Row after row, like walls, like the rungs of an endless ladder, they moved forward, swallowing Nevsky in the slow, rumbling, growing tide of bodies and banners, thousands of feet stepping in time, as if one gigantic pair of boots made Nevsky shudder in rhythm, from the statue of Alexander III to the columns of the Admiralty. Thousands of human bodies marched gravely, flaming banners raised high in a last salute.

Soldiers of the Red Army came as khaki ramparts, row after row of straight, husky shoulders, of boots firm and steady in the snow, of peaked caps with a red star on each forehead, and over them—a red banner with gold letters:

GLORY ETERNAL TO A FALLEN COMRADE

Workers of the Putilovsky factory came in gray, unbroken ranks, moving slowly under a red banner held high in sturdy fists:

HE CAME FROM THE WORKERS' RANKS.

HE GAVE HIS LIFE TO THE WORKERS OF THE WORLD.

THE PROLETARIAT THANKS ITS FALLEN FIGHTER.

Students of the Technological Institute followed, rows of young, earnest faces, of grave, clear eyes, of straight, taut bodies, of boys in black caps and girls in red kerchiefs, red as the banner that said:

THE STUDENTS OF THE TECHNOLOGICAL INSTITUTE ARE PROUD
OF THEIR SACRIFICE TO THE CAUSE OF THE REVOLUTION

Members of his Party Collective, rows of black leather jackets, marched gravely, austere as monks, stately as warriors, their banner spread high and straight, without a wrinkle, a narrow red band with black letters, as sharp and plain as the men who carried it:

THE ALL-UNION COMMUNIST PARTY OFFERS ALL AND EVERY ONE
OF ITS LIVES TO THE SERVICE OF THE WORLD REVOLUTION

Every factory of Petrograd, every club, every office, every Union, every small, forgotten Cell rolled in a single stream, gray, black and red, through a single artery of the great city, three miles of caps and red kerchiefs and feet crunching snow and banners like red gashes in the mist. And the gray walls of Nevsky were like the sides of a huge canal where human waves played a funeral dirge on a snow hard as granite.

It was cold; a piercing, motionless cold hung over the city, heavy as a mist that cut into the walls, into the cracks of sealed windows, into the bones and skins under the heavy clothes. The sky was torn into gray layers of rags, and clouds were smeared on, like patches of ink badly blotted, with a paler ink under them, and a faded ink beneath, and then a water turbid with soap suds, under which no blue could ever have existed. Smoke rose from old chimneys, gray as the clouds, as if that smoke had spread over the city, or the clouds had belched gray coils into the chimneys and the houses were spitting them back, and the smoke made the houses seem unheated. Snowflakes fluttered down lazily, once in a while, to melt on indifferent, moving foreheads.

An open coffin was carried at the head of the procession.

The coffin was red. A banner of scarlet, regal velvet was

draped over a still body; a white face lay motionless on a red pillow, a clear, sharp profile swimming slowly past the gray walls, black strands of hair scattered on the red cloth, black strands of hair hiding a dark little hole on the right temple. The face was calm. Snowflakes did not melt on the still, white forehead.

Four honorary pall-bearers, his best Party comrades, carried the coffin on their shoulders. Four bowed heads were bared to the cold. The coffin seemed very red between the blond hair of Pavel Syerov and the black curls of Victor Dunaev.

A military band followed the coffin. The big brass tubes were trimmed with bows of black crêpe. The band played "You fell as a victim."

Many years ago, in secret cellars hidden from the eyes of the Czar's gendarmes, on the frozen roads of Siberian prison camps, a song had been born to the memory of those who had fallen in the fight for freedom. It was sung in muffled, breathless whispers to the clanking of chains, in honor of nameless heroes. It traveled down dark sidelanes; it had no author, and no copy of it had ever been printed. The Revolution brought it into every music store window and into the roar of every band that followed a Communist to his grave. The Revolution brought the "Internationale" to its living and "You fell as a victim" to its dead. It became the official funeral dirge of the new republic.

The toilers of Leningrad sang solemnly, marching behind the open red coffin:

*"You fell as a victim
In our fateful fight,
A victim of endless devotion.
You gave all you had to the people you loved,
Your honor, your life and your freedom."*

The music began with the majesty of that hopelessness which is beyond the need of hope. It mounted to an ecstatic cry, which was not joy nor sorrow, but a military salute. It fell, breaking into a pitiless tenderness, the reverent tenderness that honors a warrior without tears. It was a resonant smile of sorrow.

And feet marched in the snow, and the brass tubes thundered, and brass cymbals pounded each step into the earth, and gray ranks unrolled upon gray ranks, and scarlet banners swayed to the grandeur of the song in a solemn farewell.

*"The tyrant shall fall and the people shall rise,
Sublime, almighty, unchained!
So farewell, our brother,
You've gallantly made
Your noble and valiant journey!"*

Far beyond the rows of soldiers and students and workers, in the ranks of nameless stragglers that carried no banners, a girl walked alone, her unblinking eyes fixed ahead, even though she was too far away to see the red coffin. Her hands hung limply by her sides; above the heavy woolen mittens, her wrists were bare to the cold, frozen to a dark, purplish red. Her face had no expression; her eyes had: they seemed astonished.

Those marching around her paid no attention to her. But at the start of the demonstration, someone had noticed her. Comrade Sonia, leading a detachment of women workers from the Zhenotdel, had hurried past to take her place at the head of the procession, where she had to carry a banner; Comrade Sonia had stopped short and chuckled aloud: "Really, Comrade Argounova, you—here? I should think you'd be the one person to stay away!"

Kira Argounova had not answered.

Some women in red kerchiefs had passed by. One had pointed at her and whispered something, eagerly, furtively, to her comrades; someone had giggled.

Kira walked slowly, looking ahead. Those around her sang "You fell as a victim." She did not sing.

A red banner said:

PROLETARIANS OF THE WORLD, UNITE!

A freckled woman with strands of rusty hair under a man's cap, whispered to her neighbor: "Mashka, did you get the buckwheat at the co-operative this week?"

"No. They giving any?"

"Yeah. Two pounds per card. Better get it before it's all gone."

A red banner said:

FORWARD INTO THE SOCIALISTIC FUTURE UNDER THE
LEADERSHIP OF LENIN'S PARTY!

A woman hissed through blackened stumps of teeth: "Oh,

hell! They would choose a cold day like this to make us march in another one of their cursed parades!"

"You fell a-a-as a vic-ti-i-im

In our fate— full fight,

A vic-tim of e-end-less de-vo-o-otion. . . ."

"... stood in line for two hours yesterday, but best onions you ever hope to see. . . ."

"Dounka, don't miss the sunflower-seed oil at the co-operative. . . ."

"If they don't get shot by someone, they shoot themselves—just to make us walk. . . ."

"You gave a-a-all you had fo-o-or the people you loved . . ."

A red banner said:

TIGHTEN THE BONDS OF CLASS SOLIDARITY UNDER THE
STANDARD OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY!

"God! I left soup cooking on the Primus. It will boil all over the house. . . ."

"Stop scratching, comrade."

"Your ho-nor, your li-ife and your free-ee-ee-edom. . . ."

"Comrade, stop chewing sunflower seeds. It's disrespectful. . . ."

"It's like this, Praskovia: you peel the onions and add a dash of flour, just any flour you can get, and then a dash of linseed oil and . . ."

"What do *they* have to commit suicide about?"

A red banner said:

THE COMMUNIST PARTY SPARES NO VICTIMS IN ITS FIGHT
FOR THE FREEDOM OF MANKIND

"There's a little closet under the back stairs and some straw and no one can hear us in there. . . . My husband? The poor sap will never get wise. . . ."

"Let the millet soak for a coupla hours before cooking. . . ."

"God! It's the seventh month, it is, and you can't expect me to have a figure like a match stick, and here I have to walk like this. . . . Yeah, it's my fifth one. . . ."

*"Thety-rant shall fall and thepeo-ple shallrise,
Sublime, al-mighty, unchai-ai-ai-ned! . . ."*

"Lord Jesus Christ! I bet the newspaper's grown fast to my in. Ever use newspapers to keep your feet warm, comrade? Under the socks?"

"Makes your feet stink."

"Cover your mouth when you yawn like that, comrade."

"Damn these demonstrations! Who the hell was he, anyway?"

"You gave a-a-all you had fo-o-or the people you loved . . ."

The Field of Victims of the Revolution was a huge square in the heart of the city, on the shore of the Neva, a vast, white desert, stretching for half a mile, like a bald spot on the scalp of Petrograd. The iron lances of the Summer Garden fence stood on guard at one side of the Field, and behind them lay the white desolation of a park with bare trees that seemed made of black iron like the lances.

Before the revolution, it had been called the Field of Mars and long ranks of gray uniforms had crossed it in military drills. The revolution had erected a small square of rose granite slabs, a little island lost in the center of the Field. Under the slabs were buried the first victims fallen in the streets of Petrograd in February of 1917. The days since February of 1917 had added more granite slabs to the little island. The names carved on the granite had belonged to those whose death had been the occasion for a demonstration, whose last reward had been the honor of the title of "The Revolution's Victim."

Pavel Syerov mounted a block of red granite over a red coffin. His slender figure in a tight, new leather jacket and breeches and tall military boots stood sharply, proudly against the gray sky, his blond hair waved in the wind, and his arms rose solemnly, in blessing and exhortation, over a motionless sea of heads and banners.

"Comrades!" Pavel Syerov's voice thundered over the solemn silence of thousands. "We are here, united by a common sorrow, by the common duty of paying a last tribute to a fallen hero. We have lost a great man. We have lost a great fighter. Perhaps, I may be permitted to say to you that the loss more keenly than many who join me in howling, but who knew him not while he lived. I was one

and it was a privilege which I must share with all of you. Andrei Taganov was not a famous man, but he bore, proudly and gallantly, one title: that of a Communist. He came from the toilers' ranks. His childhood was spent at the proletarian work bench. He and I, we grew up together, and together we shared the long years of toil in the Putilovsky factory. We joined the Party together, long before the Revolution, in those dark days when a Party card was a ticket to Siberia or a mark for the Czar's hangman's noose. Side by side, Comrade Taganov and I fought in the streets of this city in the glorious days of October, 1917. Side by side, we fought in the ranks of the Red Army. And in the years of peace and reconstruction that followed our victory, the years which are harder and, perhaps, more heroic than any warfare, he did more than his share of the silent, modest, self-sacrificing work which your Party carries on for you, toilers of the U.S.S.R.! He fell as a victim to that work. But our sorrow at his death shall also be joy at his achievement. He is dead, but his work, our work, goes on. The individual may fall, but the Collective lives forever. Under the guidance of the Soviets, under the leadership of the great All-Union Communist Party, we are marching into a radiant tomorrow when the honest toil of free toilers will rule the world! Then labor will no longer be slavery, as it is in capitalistic countries, but a free and happy duty to that which is greater than our petty concerns, greater than our petty sorrows, greater than our very lives—the eternal Collective of a Proletarian Society! Our glorious dead shall be remembered forever, but we are marching on. Andrei Taganov is dead, but we remain. Life and victory are ours. Ours is the future!"

The applause rolled like a dull thunder to the houses of the city far away, to the snow of the Summer Garden, and red banners waved in the roar of clapping hands, rising to the gray sky. When the hands dropped and the heads turned their eyes to the red granite slab, Comrade Syerov was gone—and against the gray sky stood the trim, proud, resolute figure of Victor Dunaev, black curls waving in the wind, eyes sparkling, mouth open wide over lustrous white teeth, throwing into the silence the clear, ringing notes of a young, powerful voice:

"Comrade workers! Thousands of us are gathered here to honor one man. But one man means nothing in the face of the mighty Proletarian Collective, no matter how worthy his achievements. We would not be here, if that man were not more than a single individual, if he were not a symbol of something greater, which we are gathered here to honor. This is

not a funeral, comrades, but a birthday party! We are not celebrating the death of a comrade, but the birth of a new humanity. Of that new humanity, he was one of the first, but not the last. The Soviets, comrades, are creating a new race of men. That new race terrifies the old world, for it brings death to all its outworn standards. What, then, are the standards of our new humanity? The first and basic one is that we have lost a word from our language, the most dangerous, the most insidious, the most evil of human words: the word 'I.' We have outgrown it. 'We' is the slogan of the future. The Collective stands in our hearts where that old monster—'self'—had stood. We have risen beyond the worship of the pocket-book, of personal power and personal vanity. We do not long for gold coins and gold medals. Our only badge of honor is the honor of serving the Collective. Our only aim is the honest toil which profits not one, but all. What is the lesson we are to learn here today and to teach our enemies beyond the borders? The lesson of a Party comrade dying for the Collective. The lesson of a Party that rules but to sacrifice itself to those it rules. Look at the world around you, comrades! Look at the fat, slobbering ministers of the capitalistic countries, who fight and stab one another in the back in their bloody scramble for power! Then look at those who rule you, who consecrate their lives to the unselfish service of the Collective, who carry the tremendous responsibility of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat! If you do, you will understand me when I say that the All-Union Communist Party is the only honest, fearless, idealistic body of men in the politics of the world today!"

The applause thundered as if the old cannons of the Peter-Paul Fortress across the river had been fired all at once. And it thundered again when Victor's black curls disappeared in the crowd, and the straight, stubby mane of Comrade Sonia waved high in the air, while she roared with all the power of her broad chest about the new duties of the new woman of the Proletariat. Then another face rose over the crowd, a thin, consumptive, unshaved face that wore glasses and opened a pale mouth wide, coughing words which no one could hear. Then another mouth spoke, and it could be heard far beyond the crowd, a mouth that bellowed sonorously through a thick, black beard. A freckled boy from the Communist Union of Youth spoke, stuttering, scratching his head. A tall spinster in a crumpled, old-fashioned hat spoke ferociously, opening

her small mouth as if she were at the dentist's, shaking thin finger at the crowd as at a school-room of disobedient pupils. A tall sailor spoke, his fists on his hips, and those the back rows laughed occasionally when they heard the front rows laughing, even though the words did not reach them.

Thousands stood, fidgeting nervously, knocking their heels together to keep them warm, burying their hands in their armpits, in their sleeves, in their fur lapels, breathing little white icicles on the old scarfs high under their noses. They too turned in holding the red banners, and those who held the poles pressed the poles tightly to their sides with their elbows, blowing on their frozen fingers. A few sneaked away, hurrying furtively down side streets.

Kira Argounova stood without moving and listened attentively. She listened to every word. Her eyes held a question she hoped the words could answer.

Snowflakes fluttered lazily down on her bowed head, on the lashes of her eyes. Her lashes glistened with snowflakes, but without tears. She looked at the words cut into the red granite:

GLORY ETERNAL TO THE VICTIMS OF THE REVOLUTION

ANDREI TAGANOV

1896-1925

She wondered whether she had killed him, or the revolution had, or both.

XVI

Leo sat alone by the fireplace, smoking. A cigarette hung limply in his hand, then slipped out of his fingers; he did not notice it. He took another cigarette and held it unlighted for a long time, not noticing it. Then he glanced around for a match, and could not find it, even though the box lay on the arm of his chair. Then he picked up the match box and stared at it, puzzled, for he had forgotten what he wanted.

He had spoken little in the past two weeks. He had kissed Kira violently, once in a while, too violently, and she had felt his effort, and she had avoided his lips and his arms.

He had left home often and she had never asked him where he went. He had been drinking too often and too much, and she had not said whether she noticed it. When they had been alone together, they had sat silently, and the silence had spoken to her, louder than any words, of something which was an end. He had been spending the last of their money and she had not questioned him about the future. She had not questioned him about anything, for she had been afraid of the answer she knew: that her fight was lost.

When Kira came home from the funeral, Leo did not rise to his feet, but sat by the fireplace, not moving. He looked at her with a slow, curious, heavy glance between heavy eyelids.

Silently, she took off her coat and hung it in her wardrobe.

She was taking off her hat when a sound made her turn: Leo was laughing; it was a hard, bitter, brutal laughter.

She looked at him, her eyes wide: "Leo, what's the matter?"

He asked her fiercely: "Don't you know?"

She shook her head.

"Well, then," he asked, "do you want to know how much I know?"

"How much . . . you know . . . about what, Leo?"

"I don't suppose this is a good time to tell you, is it? Right after your lover's funeral?"

"My . . ."

He rose and approached her, and stood, his hands in his pockets, looking down at her with the arrogantly contemptuous look she worshipped, with the scornful, drooping smile; but his arched lips moved slowly to form three words: "You little bitch!"

She stood straight, without moving, her face white. "Leo . . ."

"Shut up! I don't want to hear a sound out of you! You rotten little . . . I wouldn't mind it, if you were like the rest of us! But you, with your saintly airs, with your heroic speeches, trying to make me walk straight, while you were . . . you were rolling under the first Communist bum who took the trouble to push you!"

"Leo, who . . ."

"Shut up! . . . No! I'll give you a chance to speak. I'll give you a chance to answer just one word. Were you Taganov's mistress? Were you? Yes or no?"

"Yes."

"All the time I was away?"

"Yes."

"And all the time since I came back?"

"Yes. What else did they tell you, Leo?"

"What else did you want them to tell me?"

"Nothing."

He looked at her; his eyes were suddenly cold, clear, weary.

"Who told you, Leo?"

"A friend of yours. Of his. Our dear comrade, Pavel Syerov. He dropped in on his way back from the funeral. He just wanted to congratulate me on the loss of my rival."

"Was it . . . was it a hard blow to you, Leo?"

"It was the best piece of news I'd heard since the revolution. We shook hands and had a drink together, Comrade Syerov and I. Drank to you and your lover, and any other lovers you may have. Because, you see, that sets me free."

"Free . . . from what, Leo?"

"From a little fool who was my last hold on self-esteem! A little fool I was afraid to face, afraid to hurt! Really, you know, it's funny. You and your Communist hero. I thought he had died, making a great sacrifice by saving me for you. And he was just tired of you, he probably wanted to get you off his hands, for some other whore. So much for the sublime in the human race."

"Leo, we don't have to discuss him, do we?"

"Still love him?"

"That doesn't make any difference to you—now—does it?"

"None. None whatever. I won't even ask whether you had ever loved me. That, too, doesn't make any difference. I'd rather think you hadn't. That will make it easier for the future."

"The future, Leo?"

"Well, what did you plan it to be?"

"I . . ."

"Oh, I know! Get a respectable Soviet job and rot over a Primus and a ration card, and keep holy something in your fool imagination—your spirit or soul or honor—something that never existed, that shouldn't exist, that is the worst of all curses if it ever did exist! Well, I'm through with it. If it's murder—well—I don't see any blood. But I'm going to have champagne, and white bread, and silk shirts, and limousines, and no thoughts of any kind, and long live the Dictatorship of the Proletariat!"

"Leo . . . what . . . are you going to do?"

"I'm going away."

"Where?"

"Sit down."

He sat down at the table. His one hand lay in the circle of light under the lamp, and she noticed how still and white it was, with a net of blue veins that did not seem alive. She stood, watching it, until one finger moved. Then she sat down. Her face was expressionless. Her eyes were a little wide. He noticed her lashes—little needles of shadow on her cheeks—and the lashes were dry.

"Citizen Morozov," said Leo, "has left town."

"Well?"

"He's left Tonia—he wants no connections that could be investigated. But he's left her a nice little sum of money—oh, quite nice. She's going for a rest and vacation in the Caucasus.

She has asked me to go with her. I've accepted the job. Leo Kovalensky, the great gigolo of the U.S.S.R.!"

"Leo!"

She stood before him—and he saw terror in her eyes, such naked, raw terror that he opened his mouth, but could not laugh.

"Leo . . . not that!"

"She's an old bitch. I know. I like it better that way. She has the money and she wants me. Just a business deal."

"Leo . . . you . . . like a . . ."

"Don't bother about the names. You can't think of any as good as the ones I've thought of myself."

He noticed that the folds of her dress were shivering and that her hands were flung back unnaturally, as if leaning on space, and he asked, rising: "You're not going to be fool enough to faint, are you?"

She said, drawing her shoulders together: "No, of course not. . . . Sit down. . . . I'm all right. . . ."

She sat on the edge of the table, her hands clutching it tightly, and she looked at him. His eyes were dead and she turned away, for she felt that those eyes should be closed. She whispered: "Leo . . . if you had been killed in the G.P.U. . . . or if you had sold yourself to some magnificent woman, a foreigner, young and fresh and . . ."

"I wouldn't sell myself to a magnificent woman, young and fresh. I couldn't. Not yet. In a year—I probably will."

He rose and looked at her and laughed softly, indifferently: "Really, you know, don't you think it's not for you to express any depths of moral indignation? And since we both are what we are, would you mind telling me just why you kept me on while you had him? Just liked to sleep with me, like all the other females? Or was it my money and his position?"

Then she rose, and stood very straight, very still, and asked: "Leo, when did you tell her that you'd go with her?"

"Three days ago."

"Before you knew anything about Andrei and me?"

"Yes."

"While you still thought that I loved you?"

"Yes."

"And that made no difference to you?"

"No."

"If Syerov had not come here today, you'd still go with her?"

"Yes. Only then I'd have to face the problem of telling you."

He spared me that. That's why I was glad to hear it. Now we can say good-bye without any unnecessary scenes."

"Leo . . . please listen carefully . . . it's very important . . . please do me a last favor and answer this one question honestly, to the best of your knowledge: if you were to learn suddenly—it doesn't matter how—but if you were to learn that I love you, that I've always loved you, that I've been loyal to you all these years—would you still go with her?"

"Yes."

"And . . . if you *had* to stay with me? If you learned something that . . . that bound you to stay and . . . and to struggle on—would you try it once more?"

"If I were bound to—well, who knows? I might do what your other lover did. That's also a solution."

"I see."

"And why do you ask that? What is there to bind me?"

She looked straight at him, her face raised to his, and her hair fell back off a very white forehead, and only her lips moved as she answered with the greatest calm of her life: "Nothing, Leo."

He sat down again and clasped his hands and stretched them out, shrugging: "Well, that's that. Really, I still think you're wonderful. I was afraid of hysterics and a lot of noise. It's ended as it should have ended. . . . I'm leaving in three days. Until then—I can move out of here, if you want me to."

"No. I'd rather go. Tonight."

"Why tonight?"

"I'd rather. I can share Lydia's room for a while."

"I haven't much money left, but what there is, I want you to . . ."

"No."

"But . . ."

"Please, don't. I'll take my clothes. That's all I need."

She was packing a suitcase, her back turned to him, when he asked suddenly: "Aren't you going to say anything? Have you nothing to say?"

She turned and looked at him calmly, and answered: "Only this, Leo: it was I against a hundred and fifty million people. I lost."

When she was ready to go, he rose and asked suddenly, involuntarily: "Kira . . . you loved me, once, didn't you?"

She answered: "When a person dies, one does not stop loving him, does one?"

"Does it make any difference, Leo?"

"No. May I help you to carry the suitcase downstairs?"

"No, thank you. It's not heavy. Good-bye, Leo."

He took her hand, and his face moved toward hers, but she shook her head, and he said only: "Good-bye, Kira."

She walked out into the street, leaning slightly to her left, her right arm pulled down by the weight of the suitcase. A frozen fog hung like cotton over the street, and a lamp post made a sickly, yellow blot spilled in the fog. She straightened her shoulders and walked slowly, and the white earth creaked under her feet, and the line of her chin was parallel with the earth, and the line of her glance parallel with her chin.

To her family, three silent, startled faces, Kira explained quietly and Galina Petrovna gasped: "But what happened to . . ."

"Nothing. We're just tired of each other."

"My poor, dear child! I . . ."

"Please don't worry about me, Mother. If you'll forgive me the inconvenience, Lydia, it will be only for a little while. I couldn't have found another room for just a few weeks."

"Why certainly! Why, I'll be only too glad to have you, Kira, after all you've done for us. But why for a few weeks? Where are you going after that?"

She answered, and her voice had the intensity of a maniac's: "Abroad."

*

On the following morning, Citizen Kira Argounova filed an application for a foreign passport. She had several weeks to wait for an answer.

Galina Petrovna moaned: "It's insanity, Kira! Sheer insanity! In the first place, they won't give it to you. You have no reasons to show why you want to go abroad, and with your father's social past and all. . . . And even if you do get the passport—then what? No foreign country will admit a Russian and I can't say that I blame them. And if they admit you—what are you going to do? Have you thought of that?"

"No," said Kira.

"You have no money. You have no profession. How are you going to live?"

"I don't know."

"What will happen to you?"

"I don't care."

"I want to get out."

"But you'll be all alone, lost in a wide world, with not a . . ."

"I want to get out."

". . . with not a single friend to help you, with no aim, no future, no . . ."

"I want to get out."

On the evening of his departure, Leo came to say good-bye. Lydia left them alone in her room.

Leo said: "I couldn't go, Kira, after parting as we did. I wanted to say good-bye and . . . Unless you'd rather . . ."

She said: "No. I'm glad you came."

"I wanted to apologize for some of the things I said to you. I had no right to say them. It's not up to me to blame you. Will you forgive me?"

"It's all right, Leo. I have nothing to forgive."

"I wanted to tell you that . . . that . . . Well, no, there's nothing to tell you. Only that . . . we have a great deal to . . . remember, haven't we?"

"Yes, Leo."

"You'll be better off without me."

"Don't worry about me, Leo."

"I'll be back in Petrograd. We'll meet again. We'll meet when years have passed, and years make such a difference, don't they?"

"Yes, Leo."

"Then we won't have to be so serious any more. It will be strange to look back, won't it? We'll meet again, Kira. I'll be back."

"If you're still alive—and if you don't forget."

It was as if she had kicked a dead animal in the road and saw it jerking in a last convulsion. He whispered: "Kira . . . don't . . ."

But she knew it was only a last convulsion and she said: "I won't."

He kissed her and her lips were soft and tender and yielding to his. Then he went.

*

She had several weeks to wait.

In the evenings, Alexander Dimitrievitch came home from work and shook snow off his galoshes in the lobby, and wiped them carefully with a special rag, for the galoshes were new and expensive.

After dinner, when he had no meeting to attend, he sat in

a corner with an unpainted wooden screen frame and worked patiently, pasting match box labels on the frame. He collected the labels and guarded them jealously in a locked box. At night, he spread them cautiously on the table, and moved them slowly into patterns, trying out color combinations. He had a whole panel completed, and he muttered, squinting at it appraisingly: "It's a beauty. A beauty. I bet no one in Petrograd has anything like it. What do you think, Kira, shall I use two yellow ones and a green one in this corner, or just three yellows?"

She answered quietly: "The green one will be nice, Father."

Galina Petrovna thundered in, at night, and flung a heavy brief case on a chair in the lobby. She had had a telephone installed, and she tore the receiver off the hook and spoke hurriedly, still removing her gloves, unbuttoning her coat: "Comrade Fedorov? . . . Comrade Argounova speaking. I have an idea for that number in the Living Newspaper, for our next Club show. . . . Now when we present Lord Chamberlain crushing the British Proletariat, we'll have one of the pupils, a good husky one, wearing a red blouse, lie down on the floor and we'll put a table on him—oh, just the front legs—and we'll have the fat one, playing Lord Chamberlain, in a high silk hat, sit at the table and eat steak. . . . Oh, it doesn't have to be a real steak, just papier-mâché. . . ."

Galina Petrovna ate her dinner hurriedly, reading the evening paper. She jumped up, looking at the clock, before she finished, dabbed a smear of powder on her nose and, seizing her brief case, rushed out again to a Council meeting. On the rare evenings when she stayed at home, she spread books and newspaper clippings over the dining-room table, and sat writing a thesis for her Marxist Club. She asked, raising her head, blinking absent-mindedly: "Kira, do you happen to know, the Paris Commune, what year was that?"

"Eighteen seventy-one, Mother," Kira answered quietly.

Lydia worked at night. In the daytime, she practiced the "Internationale" and "You fell as a victim" and the Red Cavalry song on her old grand piano that had not been tuned for over a year. When she was asked to play the old classics she loved, she refused flatly, her mouth set in a thin, foolish, stubborn line. But once in a while, she sat down at the piano suddenly and played for hours, fiercely, violently, without stopping between pieces; she played Chopin and Bach and Tchaikovsky, and when her fingers were numb she cried, sobbing aloud in broken hiccoughs, senselessly, monotonously.

like a child. Galina Petrovna paid no attention to it, saying: "Just another one of Lydia's fits."

Kira was lying on her mattress on the floor, when Lydia came home from work. Lydia took a long time to undress and a longer time to whisper endless prayers before the icons in her corner. Some evenings, she came over to Kira and sat down on the mattress, and shivering in the darkness, in her long, white nightgown, her hair falling in a thick braid down her back, whispered confidentially, a ray of the street lamp beyond the window falling on her tired face with swollen eyes and dry little wrinkles in the corners of the mouth, on her dry, knotty hands that did not look young any longer: "I had a vision again, Kira, a call from above. Truly, a prophetic vision, and the voice told me that salvation shall not be long in coming. It is the end of the world and the reign of the Anti-Christ. But Judgment Day is approaching. I know. It has been revealed to me."

She whispered feverishly, she expected nothing but a peal of laughter from her sister, she was not looking at Kira, she was not certain whether Kira heard it; but she had to talk and she had to think that some human ears were listening.

"There is an old man, Kira, God's wanderer. I've been to see him. Please don't mention this to anyone, or they'll drive me from the Club. He is the Chosen One of the Lord and he knows. He says it has been predicted in the Scriptures. We are punished for our sins, as Sodom and Gomorrah were punished. But hardships and sorrows are only a trial for the soul of the righteous. Only through suffering and long-suffering patience shall we become worthy of the Kingdom of Heaven."

Kira said quietly: "I won't tell anyone, Lydia. And now you'd better go to bed, because you're tired and it's so cold here."

In the daytime, Kira led excursions through the Museum of the Revolution. In the evening, she sat in the dining room and read old books. She spoke seldom. When anyone addressed her, she answered evenly, quietly. Her voice seemed to come on a single note. Galina Petrovna wished, unconsciously, to see her angry, at least once; she did not see it. One evening when Lydia dropped a vase in the silence of the dining room and it broke with a crash, and Galina Petrovna jumped up with a startled little scream, and Alexander Shumakov shuddered, blinking—Kira raised her head slowly, as if nothing had happened.

home from the Excursion Center, she stopped at the window of a foreign book store on Liteiny, and stood looking thoughtfully at the bright covers with gay, broken, foreign letters, with chorus girls kicking long, glistening legs, with columns and searchlights and long, black automobiles. There was a jerk of life in her fingers when, every evening, as methodically as a bookkeeper, with a dull little stub of a pencil, she crossed another date off an old calendar on the wall over her mattress.

*

The foreign passport was refused.

Kira received the news with a quiet indifference that frightened Galina Petrovna, who would have preferred a stormy outbreak.

"Listen, Kira," said Galina Petrovna vehemently, slamming the door of her room to be left alone with her daughter, "let's talk sense. If you have any insane ideas of . . . of . . . Now, I want you to know that I won't permit it. After all, you're my daughter. I have some say in the matter. You know what it means, if you attempt . . . if you even dare to think of leaving the country illegally."

"I've never mentioned that," said Kira.

"No, you haven't. But I know you. I know what you're thinking. I know how far your foolish recklessness can . . . Listen, it's a hundred to one that you don't get out. And you'll be lucky if you're just shot at the border. It will be worse if you're caught and brought back. And if you're lucky enough to draw the one chance and slip out, it's a hundred to one that you'll die in a blizzard in those forests around the border."

"Mother, why discuss it?"

"Listen, I'll keep you here if I have to chain you. After all, one can be allowed to be crazy just so far. What are you after? What's wrong with this country? We don't have any luxuries, that's true, but you won't get any over there, either. A chambermaid is all you can hope to be, there, if you're lucky. This is the country for young people. I know your crazy stubbornness, but you'll get over it. Look at me. I've adapted myself, at my age, and, really, I can't say that I'm unhappy. You're only a pup and you can't make decisions to ruin your whole life before you've even started it. You'll outgrow your foolish notions. There is a chance for everyone in this new country of ours."

"Mother, I'm not arguing, am I? So let's drop the subject."

Kira returned home later than usual from her excursions. There were people she had to see in dark side streets, slipping furtively up dark stairs through unlighted doorways. There were bills to be slipped into stealthy hands and whispers to be heard from lips close to her ear. It would cost more than she could ever save to be smuggled out on a boat, she learned, and it would be more dangerous. She had a better chance if she tried it alone, on foot, across the Latvian border. She would need white clothes. People had done it, dressed all in white, crawling through the snow in the winter darkness. She sold her watch and paid for the name of the station and the village, and for a square inch of tissue paper with the map of the place where a crossing was possible. She sold the fur coat Leo had given her and paid for a forged permit to travel.

She sold her cigarette lighter, her silk stockings, her French perfume. She sold all her new shoes and her dresses. Vava Milovskaia came to buy the dresses. Vava waddled in, shuffling heavily in wornout felt boots. Vava's dress had a greasy patch across the chest, and her matted hair looked uncombed. Her face was puffed, a coarse white powder had dried in patches on her nose, and her eyes were encircled in heavy blue bags. When she took off her clothes, slowly, awkwardly, to try on the dresses, Lydia noticed the swelling at her once slender waistline.

"Vava, darling! What, already?" Lydia gasped.

"Yes," said Vava indifferently, "I'm going to have a baby."

"Oh, darling! Oh, congratulations!" Lydia clasped her hands.

"Yes," said Vava, "I'm going to have a baby. I have to be careful about eating and I take a walk every day. When it's born, we're going to register it with the Pioneers."

"Oh, no, Vava!"

"Oh, why not? Why not? It has to have a chance, doesn't it? It has to go to school, and to the University, maybe. What do you want me to do? Bring it up as an outcast? . . . Oh, what's the difference? Who knows who's right? . . . I don't know any more. I don't care."

"But, Vava, your child!"

"Lydia, what's the use? . . . I'll get a job after it's born, I'll have to. Kolya is working. It will be the child of Soviet employees. Then, later, maybe they'll admit in into the Communist Union of Youth. . . . Kira, that black velvet dress—it's so lovely. It looks almost . . . almost foreign. I know it's too tight for me now . . . but afterwards . . . maybe I'll get my

figure back. They say you do. . . . Of course, you know, Kolya isn't making very much, and I don't want to take anything from father, and . . . But father gave me a present for my birthday, fifty rubles, and I think I should . . . I could never buy anything like it anywhere."

She bought the velvet dress and two others.

To Galina Petrovna, Kira had explained: "I don't need those dresses. I don't go anywhere. And I don't like to keep them."

"Memories?" Galina Petrovna had asked.

"Yes," Kira had said. "Memories."

She did not have much money after everything was sold. She knew that she would need every ruble. She could not buy a white coat. But she had the white bear rug that she had bought from Vasili Ivanovitch long ago. She took it secretly to a tailor and ordered it made into a coat. The coat came out as a short jacket that did not reach down to her knees. She would need a white dress. She could not buy one. But she still had Galina Petrovna's white lace wedding gown. When she was alone at home, she took her old felt boots into the kitchen and painted them white with lime. She bought a pair of white mittens and a white woolen scarf. She bought a ticket to a town far out of the way, far from the Latvian border.

When everything was ready, she sewed her little roll of money into the lining of the white fur jacket. She would need it there—if she crossed the border.

On a gray winter afternoon, she left the house when no one was at home. She did not say good-bye. She left no letter. She walked down the stairs and out into the street as if she were going to the corner store. She wore an old coat with a matted fur collar. She carried a small suitcase. The suitcase contained a white fur jacket, a wedding gown, a pair of boots, a pair of mittens, a scarf.

She walked to the station. A brownish mist hung over the roof tops, and men walked, bent to the wind, huddled, their hands in their armpits. A white frost glazed the posters, and the bronze cupolas of churches were dimmed in a silvery gray. The wind whirled little coils in the snow, and kerosene lamps stood in store windows, melting streaks on the frozen white panes.

"Kira," a voice called softly on a corner.

She turned. It was Vasili Ivanovitch. He stood under a lamp post, hunched, the collar of his old coat raised to his red ears.

an old scarf twisted around his neck, two leather straps slung over his shoulders, holding a tray of saccharine tubes.

"Good evening, Uncle Vasili."

"Where are you going, Kira, with that suitcase?"

"How have you been, Uncle Vasili?"

"I'm all right, child. It may seem a strange business to find me in, I know, but it's all right. Really, it's not as bad as it looks. I don't mind it at all. Why don't you come to see us, sometimes, Kira?"

"I . . ."

"It's not a grand place, ours, and there's another family in the same room, but we're getting along. Acia will be glad to see you. We don't have many visitors. Acia is a nice child."

"Yes, Uncle Vasili."

"It's such a joy to watch her growing, day by day. She's getting better at school, too. I help her with her lessons. I don't mind standing here all day, because then I go home, and there she is. Everything isn't lost, yet. I still have Acia's future before me. Acia is a bright child. She'll go far."

"Yes, Uncle Vasili."

"I read the papers, too, when I have time. There's a lot going on in the world. One can wait, if one has faith and patience."

"Uncle Vasili . . . I'll tell them . . . over there . . . where I'm going . . . I'll tell them about everything . . . it's like an S.O.S. . . . And maybe . . . someone . . . somewhere . . . will understand. . . ."

"Child, where are you going?"

"Will you sell me a tube of saccharine, Uncle Vasili?"

"Why, no, I won't sell it to you. Take it, child, if you need it."

"Certainly not. I was going to buy it anyway from someone else," she lied. "Don't you want me for a customer? It may bring you luck."

"All right, child."

"I'll take this nice big one with the big crystals. Here you are."

She slipped the coin into his hand and the tube of saccharine into her pocket.

"Well, good-bye, Uncle Vasili."

"Good-bye, Kira."

She walked away without looking back. She was in the dusk, through gray and white streets, under a

ners bending down from old walls, grayish banners that had been red. She walked through a wide square where the tramway lights twinkled, springing out of the mist. She walked up the frozen steps of the station, without looking back.

XVII

The train wheels knocked as if an iron chain were jerked twice, then rumbled dully, clicking, then gave two sharp broken jerks again. The wheels tapped like an iron clock ticking swiftly, knocking off seconds and minutes and miles.

Kira Argounova sat on a wooden bench by the window. She had her suitcase on her lap and held it with both hands, her fingers spread wide apart. Her head leaned back against the wooden seat and trembled in a thin little shudder, like the dusty glass pane. Her lids drooped heavily over her eyes fixed on the window. She did not close her eyes. She sat for hours without moving, and her muscles did not feel the immobility, or she did not feel her muscles any longer.

Beyond the window, nothing moved in the endless stretches of snow but black smears of telegraph poles, as if the train were suspended, stationary, between two slices of white and gray, and the wheels shrieked as if grating in a void. Once in a while, a white blot on a white desert, a blot with black edges shaped as fir branches, sprang up suddenly beyond the window and whirled like lightning across the pane.

When she remembered that she had not eaten for a long time, dimly uncertain whether it was hours or days, dimly conscious that she had to eat, even though she had forgotten hunger, she broke a chunk off a stale loaf of bread, which she had bought at the station, and chewed it slowly, with effort, her jaws moving monotonously, like a machine.

Around her, men left the car, when the train stopped at stations, and came back with steaming tea kettles. Once, someone put a cup into her hand, and she drank, the hot tin edge pressed to her lips.

Telegraph wires raced the train, crossing and parting and crossing again, thin black threads flying faster, faster than the shuddering car could follow.

a dark little platform of rotted wooden planks, the last stop before the train's terminal, before the border town.

It was getting dark. Brown wheel-tracks in the snow led far away into a glowing red patch. A few sleepy soldiers on the platform paid no attention to her. A large wicker hamper rattled as husky fists lowered it to the ground from a baggage car. At the station door, someone begged loudly for hot water. Lights twinkled in the car windows.

She walked away, clutching her suitcase, following the wheel tracks in the snow.

She walked, a slender black figure, leaning faintly backward, alone in a vast field rusty in the sunset.

It was dark when she saw the village houses ahead and yellow dots of candles in windows low over the ground. She knocked at a door. A man opened it; his hair and beard were a bushy blond tangle from which two bright eyes peered inquisitively. She slipped a bill into his hand and tried to explain as fast as she could, in a choked whisper. She did not have to explain much. Those in the house knew and understood.

Behind a low wooden partition, her feet in the straw where two pigs slept huddled together, she changed her clothes, while those in the room sat around a table, as if she were not present, five blond heads, one of them in a blue kerchief. Wooden spoons knocked in the wooden bowls on the table, and the sound of another spoon came from the shelf of a brick stove in the corner, where a gray head bent, sighing, over a wooden bowl. A candle stood on the table, and three little red tongues flickered before a bronze triangle of ikons in a corner, little glimmers of red in the bronze halos.

She put on the white boots and took off her dress; her naked arms shuddered a little, even though the room was hot and stuffy. She put on the white wedding gown, and its long train rustled in the straw, and a pig opened one slit of an eye. She lifted the train and pinned it carefully to her waistline, with big safety-pins. She wound the white scarf tightly about her hair, and put on the white fur jacket. She felt cautiously the little lump in the lining over her left breast, where she had sewn the bills; it was the last and only weapon she would need.

When she approached the table, the blond giant said, his voice expressionless: "Better wait for an hour or so, till the moon sets. The clouds ain't so steady."

He moved, making room for her on the bench, pointing to it silently, imperatively. She raised the lace dress, stepped over the bench and sat down. She took off the jacket and held

it over her arm, pressed tightly to her body. Two pairs of feminine eyes stared at her high lace collar, and the girl in the blue kerchief whispered something to the older woman, her eyes awed, incredulous.

Silently, the man put a steaming wooden bowl before the guest.

"No, thank you," she said. "I'm not hungry."

"Eat," he ordered. "You'll need it."

She ate obediently a thick cabbage soup that smelled of hot lard.

The man said suddenly in the silence, without looking at her: "It's pretty near a whole night's walk."

She nodded.

"Pretty young," said the woman across the table, shaking her head, and sighed.

When she was ready to go, the man opened the door to a cold wind whining over an empty darkness, and muttered in his blond beard: "Walk as long as you can. When you see a guard—crawl."

"Thank you," she said, as the door closed.

*

Snow rose to her knees, and each step was like a fall forward, and she held her skirt high, clutched in her fist. Around her, a blue that did not seem blue, a color that was no color, that had never existed in the world she had known, stretched without end, and sometimes she thought she was standing alone, very tall, very high over a flat circle, and sometimes she thought the bluish whiteness was a huge wall closing in over her head.

The sky hung low, in grayish patches, and black patches, and streaks of a blue that one could never remember in the daytime; and blots of something which was not a color and not quite a light ray, flowed from nowhere, trickling once in a while among the clouds, and she bent her head not to see it.

There were no lights ahead; she knew that the lights behind her had long since vanished, even though she did not look back. She carried nothing; she had left her suitcase and her old clothes in the village; she would need nothing—there—ahead—but the little roll in the lining of her jacket, and she touched it cautiously, once in a while.

Her knees hurt with the piercing pain of stretched sinews, as if she were climbing a long stairway. She watched the pain, a little curiously, like an outsider. Scalding needles pierced

er cheeks, and they itched, and she scratched them once in a while with a white mitten, but it did not help.

She heard nothing but the rustle of the snow under her boots, and she tried to walk faster, not to listen beyond the sound of her feet, not to notice the slurred shadows of sounds hanging around her, floating from nowhere.

She knew she had been walking for hours, that which she had once called hours. There were no hours here; there were only steps, only legs rising and falling deep into the snow, and a snow that had no end. Or had it an end? That, really, did not matter. She did not have to think of that. She had to think only that she had to walk. She had to walk west. That was the only problem, that was the total of all the problems. Had she any problems? Had she any questions to be answered? If she had—they would be answered—there. She did not have to think. She had to get out. She would think—then—if there were thoughts to be faced. Only she had to get out. Only to get out.

In the white mittens, her fingers ached, her bones drawn tight, her joints squeezed as in a vise. She must be cold, she thought; she wondered dimly whether it was a very cold night.

Before her, the blue snow was luminous, the snow lighting the sky. There was nothing but a haze, ahead of her, where the earth was smeared into the clouds, and she was not sure whether the clouds were close to her face and she would knock against them, or many miles away.

She had left nothing behind. She was walking out of a void, a void white and unreal as that earth around her. She could not give up. She still had them—those two legs that could move—and something lost somewhere within her, that told them to move. She would not give up. She was alive; alive and alone in a desert which was not a living earth. She had to walk, because she was still alive. She had to get out.

Long spirals of snow rose in the wind, brushing the low sky, far ahead. She saw strips of a sharp black above her, and specks of bright dust twinkling at her from between the clouds. She huddled tighter, hunching her shoulders; she did not want to be seen.

Something hurt in her waistline, as if each step jerked her spine forward, and something throbbed, rising up her back. She pressed her fingers to the roll in her jacket. She had to watch that. She could not lose it. She had to watch that and her legs. The rest did not matter.

She stopped short when she saw a tree, the long white pines

mid of a giant fir, rising suddenly out of the snow, and she stood without breath, her knees bent, crouching like an animal, listening. She heard nothing. Nothing moved behind the low branches. She went on. She did not know how long she had waited.

She did not know whether she was moving forward. Perhaps she was only stamping her feet, up and down, on the same spot. Nothing changed in that white immensity around her. Would it ever change? She was like an ant crawling over a white table, a hard, bright, lustrous, enameled table. She threw her arms wide, suddenly feeling the space around her. She looked up at the sky. She looked, her head and shoulders thrown back. Those twinkling splinters above—they were endless worlds, people said. Wasn't there room for her in the world? Who was mowing her feet off the small space they held in that vast universe? Who were they and why were they doing it? She had forgotten. She had to get out.

Those legs were not hers any longer. They moved like a wheel, like levers, rising, bending, falling, up and down, down with a jerk that reverberated up to her scalp.

She felt, suddenly, that she was not tired, she had no pain, she was light and free, she was well, too well, she could walk like this through years to come. Then, a sudden jolt of pain shot through her shoulder blades, and she wavered, and she felt as if hours went by while a motionless leg rose, rose the space of an atom at a time and fell down again, cutting the snow, and she was walking again. She bent, her arms huddled over her stomach, drawing herself into a little ball, so that her legs would have less to carry.

Somewhere there was a border and it had to be crossed. She thought, suddenly, of a restaurant she had seen, for the flash of a second, in a German film. It had a sign over the door, with plain, thin letters, nickel-plated letters, insolent in their simplicity, on dull white glass—"Café Diggy-Daggy." They had no signs like that in the country she was leaving. They had no pavements lustrous as a ball-room floor. She repeated senselessly, without hearing the sounds, as a charm, as a prayer: "Café Diggy-Daggy . . . Ca . . . fé . . . Dig . . . gy . . . Dag . . . gy . . ." and she tried to walk in rhythm with the syllables.

She did not have to tell her legs to move any longer. She thought they were running. An instinct was driving her, the instinct of an animal, whipping her blindly into the battle of self-preservation.

She was whispering through frozen lips: "You're a good soldier, Kira Argounova, you're a good soldier. . . ."

*

Ahead of her, the blue snow billowed dimly against the sky. The waves did not change as she came closer; they stood out, sharper, harder, low hills undulating in the darkness. White cones rose to the sky, with black edges of branches.

Then she saw a black figure. The figure was moving. It was moving in a straight line across the hills, across the horizon. She saw the legs, like scissors, opening and closing. She saw a small black spike on his shoulder, and it gleamed sharply, once, against the sky.

She fell down on her stomach. She felt, dimly, as through an anesthetic, snow biting the wrists under her sleeves, rolling into her boots. She lay still, her heart pounding against the snow.

Then she raised her head a little and crawled slowly forward, on her stomach. She stopped and lay still, watching the black figure in the distance, and crawled again, and stopped, and watched, and crawled again.

Citizen Ivan Ivanov was six feet tall. He had a wide mouth and a short nose, and when he was puzzled, he blinked, scratching his neck.

Citizen Ivan Ivanov was born in the year 1900, in a basement, in a side street of the town of Vitebsk. He was the ninth child of the family. At the age of six, he started in as apprentice to a shoemaker. The shoemaker beat him with leather suspenders and fed him buckwheat gruel. At the age of ten, he made his first pair of shoes, all by himself, and he wore them proudly down the street, the leather squeaking. That was the first day Citizen Ivan Ivanov remembered all through his life.

At the age of fifteen, he lured the neighborhood grocer's daughter into a vacant lot and raped her. She was twelve years old, with a chest as flat as a boy's, and she whined shrilly. He made her promise not to tell anyone, and he gave her fifteen kopeks and a pound of sugar candy. That was the second day he remembered.

At the age of sixteen, he made his first pair of military boots for a real general, and he polished them thoroughly, spitting on the flannel rag, and he delivered them to the general himself, who patted him on the shoulder and gave him a tip of a ruble. That was the third day he remembered.

There was a gay bunch of fellows around the shoemaker's

shop. They rose at dawn and they worked hard and their shirts stuck to their backs with sweat, but they had a good time at night. There was a saloon on the corner of the street and they sang gay songs, their arms about one another's shoulders. There was a house around the corner, where a widowed little man played the piano, and Ivan's favorite was a fat blonde in a pink kimono; she was a foreigner called Gretchen. And those were the nights Citizen Ivan Ivanov remembered.

He served in the Red Army, and shells roaring overhead made bets on lice races with the soldiers in the bottom of the trench.

He was wounded and told he would die. He stared daily at the wall, for it did not make any difference.

He recovered and married a servant girl with round cheeks and round breasts, because he had grown her in trouble. Their son was blond and husky, and they named him Ivan. They went to church on Sundays, and his wife cooked mince with roasted mutton, when they could get it. She raised her arm high over her fat legs, and knelt, and scrubbed the vine pine floor of their room. And she sent him to a public bath once every month. And Citizen Ivan Ivanov was happy.

Then he was transferred to the border guard, and his wife went back to live with her parents in the village, and took her son with her.

Citizen Ivan Ivanov had never learned to read.

Citizen Ivan Ivanov was guarding the border of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics.

He walked slowly through the snow. His wife in his mind, blowing at his frozen fingers, coming the cold. He felt his mind going down hill, but going up hill was hard, and he scrambled up, groaning, to stand there alone on the watch with the wind biting his nose, and not a living soul for miles around.

Then, Citizen Ivan Ivanov saw something moving in the snow, far away.

He was not sure it had moved. He guessed that the telephone, but the wind raised whirls of snow from over the plain and he thought he might have been mistaken only a hat seemed to, if something had moved, which was not very far. He yelled, cupping his hands over his mouth: "You're here!"

Nothing answered. Nothing moved in the plain under the hill.

He yelled: "You'd better come out or I'll shoot!"
There was no answer.

He hesitated, scratching his neck. He stared far out into the night. But he had to be safe.

Citizen Ivan Ivanov raised his rifle to his shoulder and fired.

A blue flame streaked through the darkness and a dull echo rolled in the distance, far away. There was no sound after the echo had died, no movement in the white plain under the hill.

Citizen Ivan Ivanov scratched his neck. He should go down there and investigate, he thought. But it was too far, and the snow was too deep, and the wind was too cold. He waved his hand and turned away. "Just a rabbit, most likely," he muttered, descending the hill to continue his route.

Kira Argounova lay very still in the snow, on her stomach, her arms thrown forward, and only a lock of hair moved falling from under the white scarf, and her eyes followed the black figure walking away across the hills, disappearing in the distance. She lay still for a long time, watching a red spot widening slowly under her in the snow.

She thought, clearly, sharply, in words she could almost hear: "Well, I'm shot. Well, that's how it feels to be shot. It's not so frightful, is it?"

She rose slowly to her knees. She took off a mitten and slipped her hand into her jacket to feel the roll of bills over her left breast. She hoped the bullet had not gone through the bills. It hadn't. The little hole in the jacket was just under them. And her fingers felt something hot and sticky.

It did not hurt much. It felt like a sharp little burn in her side, with less pain than in her tired legs. She tried to stand up. She swayed a little, but she could stand. There was a dark patch on her jacket and the fur was drawn into red, warm clusters. It did not bleed much; just a few drops she could feel slithering down her skin.

She could walk. She would keep her hand on it and it would not bleed. She was not far from the border now. Over there beyond, she would have it bandaged. It was not serious and she could stand it. She had to go on.

She staggered forward and wondered at the weakness in her knees. She whispered to herself through lips that were turning blue: "Of course, you're wounded and you're a little weak. That's to be expected. Nothing to worry about."

Swaying, her shoulders drooping forward, her hand at her side, she went on, through the snow, stumbling, her knees meeting, faltering as if she were drunk. She watched little dark

drops falling off the hem of her lace gown, slowly, once in a while. Then the drops stopped falling. She smiled.

She felt no pain. The last of her consciousness had gone into one will into two legs that were growing weaker and weaker. She had to go on. She had to get out. She had to get out.

She whispered to herself, as if the sound of her voice were a living fluid giving her strength: "You're a good soldier. Kira Argounova, you're a good soldier and now's the time to prove it. . . . Now. . . . Just one effort. . . . One last effort. . . . It's not so very bad yet, is it? . . . You can make it. . . . Just walk. . . . Please, walk. . . . You have to get out. . . . get out. . . . get out. . . . get out. . . ."

She pressed her hand to the roll of bills in her jacket. She could not lose that. She had to watch that. She could not see things clearly any longer. She had to remember that.

Her head was drooping forward. She closed her eyes, leaving slits open between her lashes to watch her legs, her legs that should not stop.

She opened her eyes suddenly to find herself lying in the snow. She raised her head slowly, wondering, for she did not remember having fallen.

She must have fainted, she thought, wondering curiously how it felt to faint, for she did not remember.

It took a long time to rise. She noticed a red spot in the snow where she had fallen. She must have lain there for some time. She staggered forward, then stopped, some thought forming itself slowly in her dim eyes, and she came back and covered the red spot with snow, with her foot.

She went on, wondering dimly why the weather had become so hot and why the snow did not melt when it was so hot, so hot that she could hardly breathe, and what if the snow did melt? She would have to swim, then, but she was a good swimmer and that would be easier than walking, for her legs could rest, then.

She went reeling forward. She did not know whether she was walking in the right direction. She had forgotten that she had to think of a direction. She remembered only that she had to walk.

She did not notice that the hill ended abruptly in the edge of a ravine, and she fell and rolled down the white slope in a whirl of legs, arms and snow.

She could move nothing but one hand, as she lay on the wet snow off her face, off her lips, off her nose, off her

lay huddled in a white heap on the bottom of a white gulch. The time it took to rise again seemed like hours, like years: just to draw her hands to her body, at first, palms down, to press her elbows to her body, turn her legs, push her feet out, then rise to her knees, leaning on tense, trembling arms, and breathe, with a breath like a knife inside, then rise a little further, leaning on one hand, then tear that hand, too, off the snow, and rise, and stand erect, panting.

She made a few steps. But she could not walk up the other side of the gulch. She fell and crawled up the hill on her hands and knees, dipping her burning face into the snow to cool her cheeks.

She rose to her feet again on the top of the hill. She had lost her mittens. She felt something in the corners of her mouth and she rubbed her lips and looked at her fingers: her fingers were pink with froth.

She felt too hot. She tore the white scarf off her hair and threw it down into the gulch. The wind was a relief, blowing her hair back in a straight, shivering line.

She went on, raising her face to the wind.

She felt too hot and it was so difficult to breathe. She tore off her fur jacket and dropped it into the snow, and went on, without looking back.

In the sky, the clouds were rolling away in whirls of blue and gray and dark green. Ahead of her, above the snow, a line glowed, rising, and it was a transparent white, but above the snow it looked like a very pale green.

She pitched forward, and jerked back again, brushing the hair out of her eyes, and faltered, and went on, a trembling, swaying, reeling, drunken figure in a long wedding gown of lace white as the snow around her.

The train was torn off her waistline and it dragged behind her, her legs getting tangled in the long lace. She staggered blindly, the wind waving her hair, her arms swinging, as if they, too, were loose in the wind. She leaned back and her breasts stood out under the white lace, and from under her left breast a little stream of red trickled down slowly, and long dark patches spread down to the train, and delicate flowers of lace were red on the white satin.

And suddenly her dry lips, caked and sealed with froth, opened again, and she called softly, one name, as a plea for help from over there, from across the border, as a caress, her voice tender and almost joyous:

"Leo! . . ."

She repeated, louder and louder, without despair, as if the sound, that one sound in the world, were giving her life. "Leo! . . . Leo! . . . Leo! . . ."

She was calling him, the Leo that could have been, that would have been had he lived there, where she was going, across the border. He was awaiting her there, and she had to go on. She had to walk. There, in that world across the border, a life was awaiting her to which she had been faithful her every living hour, her only banner that had never been lowered, that she had held high and straight, a life she could not betray, she would not betray now by stopping while she was still living, a life she could still serve, by walking, by walking forward a little longer, just a little longer.

Then she heard a song, a tune not loud enough to be a human sound, a song as a last battle-march. And it was not a funeral dirge, it was not a hymn, it was not a prayer. It was a tune from an old operetta, the "Song of Broken Glass."

Little notes of music trembled in hesitation, and burst and rolled in quick, fine waves, like the thin, clear ringing of glass. Little notes leaped and exploded and laughed, laughed with a full, unconditional, consummate human joy.

She did not know whether she was singing. Perhaps she was only hearing the music somewhere.

But the music had been a promise; a promise at the dawn of her life. That which had been promised then, could not be denied to her now. She had to go on.

She went on, a fragile girl in the flowing, medieval gown of a priestess, red stains spreading on the white lace.

At dawn, she fell on the edge of a slope. She lay very still, for she knew that she could not rise again.

Far down, below her, an endless snow plain stretched into the sunrise. The sun had not come. A band of pink, pale and young, like the breath of a color, like the birth of a color, rose over the snow and glowed, trembling, flowing up into a pale blue, a blue immensity of sparks twinkling under a thin veil, like the faint, fading ghost of a lake in a summer sun, like the still surface of a lake with a sun drowned far in its depths. And the snow, at the rise of that liquid flame, seemed to quiver, breathing, glittering softly. Long bands stretched across the plain, shadows that seemed light itself, a heavier, bluer light with edges ready to burst into dancing fires.

A lonely little tree stood far away in the plain. It had no leaves. Its slim, rare twigs had gathered no snow. It stretched